



City of Baltimore

City Council
City Hall, Room 408
100 North Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: President Young

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day - December 21, 2012

FOR the purpose of declaring December 21, 2012 as National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day in Baltimore City to bring attention to the struggle of people experiencing homelessness, to mourn the passing of our neighbors who, in life, lacked stable housing, and to rededicate ourselves to ending the conditions that create and maintain homelessness.

Recitals

Each year since 1990, communities across the country have come together on or near the first day of winter and the longest night of the year 'to bring attention to the tragedy of homelessness and to remember our homeless friends who have paid the ultimate price for our nation's failure to end homelessness.' Baltimore City joins the National Coalition for the Homeless, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, the National Consumer Advisory Board, local homeless service providers, and people throughout the country in recognition of Homelessness Persons' Memorial Day. The statistics speak to the large and growing problem both nationally and in Baltimore City:

- Nationally, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's last, official "homeless count", nearly 700,000 people find themselves in shelters, on the streets, or in other places unfit for human habitation on any given night in the United States — a number that does not include the many who are unstably "doubled up" with family and friends. Over the course of the year, the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty estimates that more than 3 million people experience homelessness — including 1.3 million children.

- In Baltimore City, according to Counting Matters: Baltimore City Homeless Point-in-Time Homeless Census Report 2011 produced by Morgan State University for the Mayor's Office of Human Services, at least 4,088 people experience homelessness on any given night — almost half (43.9%) of whom were unsheltered on the night of the census (January 25, 2011).

The report notes a troubling trend - the increased number of people experiencing homelessness from 2,681 in 2005 to 4,088 in 2011. Moreover, the report documents an increase in the rate of homelessness since adoption of the City's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness: from 2007-2009, documented homelessness increased by 13.9% (from 3,002 to 3,419); from 2009-2011, documented homelessness increased by 19.6%.

The report found that families with children comprised nearly half (44%) of the sheltered population of people experiencing homelessness. A substantial percentage of the children (76.9%) identified in the census were ten years old and younger. A parallel count of homeless youths, conducted by the Center for Adolescent Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, documented 640 unaccompanied homeless youth (between the ages of 13-25) a more than 50% increase since 2009, when 426 youth were identified.

Counting Matters documented a slight increase of the number of veterans since 2009; an increase of 26 sheltered and 6 unsheltered veterans were counted in 2011 this despite renewed commitments and laudable efforts by the VA and others to end veteran homelessness. As the wars draw to an end, the shame of veteran homelessness will likely rise without additional resources for housing and services.

According to Counting Matters, the three top health concerns that impact the homeless population in the City of Baltimore are substance abuse, mental health, and chronic illness. A 2005 study by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council found that this "triple morbidity" of substance abuse and mental illness together with chronic health problems increases the risk of early death. Indeed, people experiencing homelessness are 34 times more likely to die prematurely than their housed counterparts and have an average life expectancy of between 42 and 52 years old.

While federal health reform offers an opportunity to increase substantially health insurance coverage for this vulnerable population an opportunity that will be fully seized only if we ensure robust outreach, enrollment, and access to quality care the most critical health condition faced by this population namely, homelessness itself can be addressed only by increasing the availability of affordable housing.

Although some of the increases found in local homeless censuses can be explained by improved survey efforts, it is clear that homelessness in Baltimore is on the rise as we approach the halfway point of the City's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness. We need to recommit to achieving the central goals of the 10 Year Plan: ensuring access to affordable housing, comprehensive health care and supportive services, and livable incomes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council hereby declares December 21, 2012 as National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day in Baltimore City to bring attention to the struggle of people experiencing homelessness, to mourn the passing of our neighbors who, in life, lacked stable housing, and to rededicate ourselves to ending the conditions that create and maintain homelessness fundamentally, poverty and the lack of affordable housing.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the President & CEO of Health Care for the Homeless, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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