



City of Baltimore

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

Legislation Text

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* **Warning:** This is an unofficial, introductory copy of the bill.
The official copy considered by the City Council is the first reader copy.

Introductory*

City of Baltimore Council Bill R (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember McCray

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning

Informational Hearing - The Effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder on First Responders

For the purpose of inviting the Commissioner of the Baltimore City Police Department, the Chief of the Baltimore City Fire Department, the Baltimore City Sheriff, the Chief of the Baltimore City School Police, the Director of the Office of Emergency Management, the Chief of the Baltimore City Environmental Police, and the Director of the Department of Human Resources to appear before the Baltimore City Council to discuss how post-traumatic stress symptoms, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), compassion fatigue, and burnout effect first responders and to inform the Council on intervention programs that are currently in place to provide City employees with relief from trauma and burnout.

Recitals

Emergency medical services personnel, firefighters, and police officers face unprecedented challenges in the line of duty. Exposure to drug overdoses, vehicle collisions, homicides, suicides, and violent crime can take an emotional toll on a first responder. Because emergency response personnel witness such a high number of serious injuries and deaths, Baltimore City needs to spotlight the mental health of its first responders. A staggering 88% of emergency workers have experienced at least 1 traumatic event while working, and 10 to 14% have been diagnosed with PTSD.

Some first responders do not have access to the resources they need to address traumatic events. Many emergency workers continue to witness the ills of society, dealing with trauma through dialogue with colleagues, who are often taxed themselves. While these conversations provide a helpful way for individuals to communicate about their experiences with a sympathetic peer, those who need help from a professional often do not have many options due to tight budgets and a lack of resources provided by their organizations. As a result, some individuals turn to negative ways to address trauma, including substance abuse and suicide.

According to the Ruderman Family Foundation in a report on first responders and mental health, first responders are more likely to die from suicide than in the line of duty. PTSD and depression stemming from exposure to trauma were significant factors contributing to this high rate of suicide. One survey of first responders found that 6.6% had attempted suicide. While most mental health professionals believe suicide attempts by first responders are under reported due to stigma, this percentage is more than 10 times the rate of attempted suicides reported by the general population.

To prevent the worst outcomes associated with PTSD in first responders and to give our emergency professionals the support and resources they require, the City Council would like to be informed about the factors that lead to PTSD, the types of intervention programs that are already available or are able to be provided to employees witnessing trauma on the job, and the steps agencies are taking to alleviate employees' exposure to trauma, including rotating individuals in assignments where they are most likely to experience continuous traumatic stress.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the Baltimore City Council invites the Commissioner of the Baltimore City Police Department, the Chief of the Baltimore City Fire Department, the Baltimore City Sheriff, the Chief of the Baltimore City School Police, the Director of the Office of Emergency Management, the Chief of the Baltimore City Environmental Police, and the Director of the Department of Human Resources to appear before the Baltimore City Council to discuss how post-traumatic stress symptoms, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), compassion fatigue, and burnout affect first responders and to inform the Council on intervention programs that are currently in place to provide City employees with relief from trauma and burnout.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Commissioner of the Baltimore City Police Department, the Chief of the Baltimore City Fire Department, the Baltimore City Sheriff, the Chief of the Baltimore City School Police, the Director of the Office of Emergency Management, the Chief of the Baltimore City Environmental Police, the Director of the Department of Human Resources and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the Baltimore City Council.