



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: Councilmember Clarke

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Informational Hearing - Tracking Police Involved Lawsuits

FOR the purpose of requesting that representatives from the Baltimore Police Department, the Law Department, and the Department of Finance appear before the Council to discuss the reasons why an increase in funding for police involved litigation was required in the 2012 budget, explain the City's current process for tracking and learning from legal claims against the Police Department, and explore how the information provided by these claims can be better used to reduce the amount and cost of litigation against the Police Department.

Recitals

In order to close a multi-million dollar projected deficit, the City Budget adopted for fiscal year 2012 necessarily included painful and difficult cuts to many important services. Still, a handful of areas did see increased funding compared to FY 2011. One budget item that was increased was spending on legal expenses for the Baltimore Police Department. According to the FY2012 budget agency detail publication, "an additional \$846, 806 for judgements and an additional \$653,194 for legal services" was added to the Police Department's budget.

These increasing legal judgements against the Police Department are a double burden for the City. Not only do they siphon off scarce funds that could have been used to address other pressing problems in Baltimore, but each judgement also can represent an instance where citizens were avoidably harmed by the actions of officers whose job it is to protect them. Because of this, it is especially troubling to see the costs for police litigation rising rather than declining.

New York City has been faced with a similar combination of rising police litigation costs and shrinking municipal budgets. There, the city's comptroller has proposed that the police department adopt a more rigorous and systematic approach to tracking litigation against the department. The idea is to help the department to zero in on the small number of officers who may not be living up to what the public should expect of them as well as uncover areas where additional training or new procedures could reduce negative interactions with citizens.

If specific problem areas can be identified in this way, acting proactively to address them would save money while simultaneously improving relations with the community. It is therefore worth exploring whether these risk

management strategies could be successfully implemented in Baltimore as well.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That representatives from the Baltimore Police Department, the Law Department, and the Department of Finance are requested to appear before the Council to discuss the reasons why an increase in funding for police involved litigation was required in the 2012 budget, explain the City's current process for tracking and learning from legal claims against the Police Department, and explore how the information provided by these claims can be better used to reduce the amount and cost of litigation against the Police Department.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Police Commissioner, the City Solicitor, the Director of Finance, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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