



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 Harris

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Request for State Legislation - Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Membership

FOR the purpose of requesting the Honorable Chair and Members of the Baltimore City Senate Delegation and the Honorable Chair and Members of the Baltimore City House Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly to introduce legislation in the 2008 Session to provide for the election of certain members of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners; and respectfully urging the Governor to support legislation altering existing Maryland State law to provide for more public input in the determination of local community representation on the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners.

Recitals

The results of a recently released study from Education Week showing that, in 2004, almost 2/3rds of Baltimore high school students failed to get diplomas, or 34.6%, on the heels of an analysis of 2003 graduation rates by that publication that showed that, in the year before, only 38.5% of high school students graduated 4 years after they began high school, is cause for grave concern.

Although Baltimore school officials dispute the results of both studies, it cannot be refuted that Baltimore graduation rates are dismal and among the lowest in the country - in 2006, it was reported that Baltimore's rate was the 2nd worst after those of Detroit; in 2007, Baltimore dropped to 3rd worst in the country, again behind Detroit and, thanks to a worsening failing rate, Cleveland, Ohio.

In C.C. 06-0181R "Informational Hearing - Graduation Rates - Baltimore City Public Schools", a Resolution calling for the CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools to address the City Council on Baltimore's dismal public school graduation rate, it is reported that in the City nearly 1/3rd of all City adults do not have a high school diploma or a GED, that almost 1/2 of public high-school students drop out before 12th grade, that there are 200,000 residents 16 and older who do not have jobs, and that 1/2 of Baltimore adults are not working.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs reports that 68% of State prison inmates did not receive a high school diploma - a 1997 study showed that about 41% of inmates in the nation's state and federal prisons and local jails and 31% of probationers had not completed high school or gotten a

GED. In comparison, 18% of the general population age 18 or older had not finished 12th grade. The groups of state prison inmates who had not completed high school or the GED included: 40% of males and 42% of females; 27% of whites, 44% of blacks, and 53% of Hispanics; 47% drug offenders; and 52% of inmates 24 or younger and 35% of inmates 45 or older.

In *Prisoners Once Removed: The Impact of Incarceration and Reentry on Children, Families, and Communities*, a publication of the Urban Institute, it is reported that 55% of all state prisoners reported having at least one minor child back in the community. Because the overwhelming majority of state prisoners are men, incarcerated parents are predominantly fathers (93%). However, the number of incarcerated mothers has grown dramatically in the past decade. Between 1991 and 2000, the number of incarcerated mothers increased by 87%, compared with 60% for fathers. The majority of parents in state prison (70 %) do not have a high school diploma; 31% have completed their GED.

These studies of inmate populations do not bode well for Baltimore City's public high school drop outs. Because Baltimore's children, parents, educators, and employers have the most to lose if Baltimore's children do not receive an adequate education, it is imperative that they have more of a voice in choosing those persons charged with setting public education policy. Providing for a partially elected school board will be an important step in providing for local input in deciding policy and in establishing accountability for those officials who do not act in the best interest of the public school students they are charged with stewarding.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Honorable Chair and Members of the Baltimore City Senate Delegation and the Honorable Chair and Members of the Baltimore City House Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly are requested to introduce legislation in the 2008 Session to provide for the election of certain members of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners; and that the Governor is respectfully urged to support legislation altering existing Maryland State law to provide for more public input in the determination of local community representation on the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor, the Honorable Chair and Members of the Baltimore City Senate Delegation to the 2008 Maryland General Assembly, the Honorable Chair and Members of the Baltimore City House Delegation to the 2008 Maryland General Assembly, the Mayor, the CEO of the Baltimore City Public School System, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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