



Legislation Text

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The official copy considered by the City Council is the first reader copy.

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Introductory*

**City of Baltimore
Council Bill
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: President Scott

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning
Inmate Release Due to COVID-19

For the purpose of supporting the American Civil Liberties Union's recommendation that the State release certain inmates from jail and prison due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recitals

The State of Maryland, like much of the rest of the country, is in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic. Governor Hogan recently stated that Maryland is an emerging hotspot for the disease. The CDC recommends that people practice social distancing, or that people stay at least 6 feet away from others, to prevent the spread of the disease. The close quarters found in jails and prisons makes social distancing impossible in most scenarios. Therefore, jails and prisons are likely to become hotbeds of the disease if steps are not taken to reduce the number of inmates in these facilities.

To slow the spread of COVID-19, the ACLU has asked Governors to grant commutations to certain inmates. Specifically, any inmate whose sentence is scheduled to end in the next year, any inmate who is being held on a technical supervision violation, and any inmate who is particularly vulnerable to the disease and whose sentence is scheduled to end in the next two years. The Centers for Disease Control has found that individuals who are over 65 years of age and people with serious underlying conditions like heart disease, chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, liver disease, chronic kidney disease, diabetes, severe obesity, and people who are immunocompromised for other reasons are particularly likely to suffer severe illness or death due to the disease.

The fewer inmates that are in jail or prison at this time, the less likely COVID-19 is to spread in these facilities or the surrounding communities. Due to the severe threat, many courts, parole boards, governors in other states have already taken steps to reduce the size of their inmate populations. If the number of inmates in Maryland's jails or prisons is not reduced, the disease could ravage the incarcerated population and those who work in the facilities, as well as their families and communities. In short, reducing the number of inmates at this time protects not only inmates but the greater society as a whole, because if correctional facility workers are exposed to the fast spread of the disease in their workplace, they will bring it outside their workplaces and into their communities. To slow the spread of COVID-19, the Governor should follow the ACLU's recommendation and grant commutations to certain inmates.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the Baltimore City Council supports the American Civil Liberties Union's recommendation that the State release certain inmates from jail and prison due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor, the Mayor, the Director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.