



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 **Investigative Hearing - Gender Discrimination at the City's Homeless Shelter**

FOR the purpose of calling on representatives from Jobs, Housing & Recovery Inc. (JHR), and the Homeless Services Program in the Mayor's Office of Human Services, to appear before the Council to discuss the allegations raised by the ACLU of gender discrimination and intimidation of women at the homeless shelter operated for the City by JHR.

Recitals

When the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Housing and Resource Center opened in July to replace the City's old homeless shelter, it was hailed as a big step forward in the City's effort to make homelessness a rare and brief experience in Baltimore. However, along with improved services and amenities, the Center also came with only 250 beds for the homeless - 100 fewer than the old shelter.

Recently, serious concerns related to this reduced capacity have come to light. Specifically, allegations have arisen within the homeless community that the Center routinely turns away as many as a quarter of the women who seek shelter and help there; and consequently discourages many more women from even attempting to take advantage of the Center.

According to an ACLU press release, the Center makes up the 100 bed shortfall in capacity between the old and new facilities by providing 100 overflow beds at another site. However, for unknown reasons, these beds are for men only. When the Center's 75 beds for women are filled each night any further women seeking shelter are simply turned away and forced to spend the night on the streets, exposed to the elements, violence, and sexual assault. According to the Center's own numbers, on any particular evening more than a score of women are sometimes sent back out into the night.

Perhaps even more disturbingly, the ACLU claims that when some homeless women have complained to those at the Center that the overflow policy amounts to gender discrimination those women have been threatened with a loss

of their spot at the shelter and being “blacklisted for life” if they speak to civil rights attorneys about the situation.

No City program can ever be permitted to discriminate against individuals in the provision of services because of their gender; and no City employee or contractor should ever believe for a moment that they can get away with intimidating citizens to prevent them from exercising their Constitutional rights. These allegations, if true, represent a very serious breach of public trust that must be remedied immediately.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council calls on representatives from Jobs, Housing & Recovery Inc. (JHR), and the Homeless Services Program in the Mayor’s Office of Human Services, to appear before the Council to discuss the allegations raised by the ACLU of gender discrimination and intimidation of women at the homeless shelter operated for the City by JHR.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the City Solicitor, the Director of the Homeless Services Program in the Mayor’s Office of Human Services, the Executive Director of Jobs, Housing & Recovery, Inc., the Executive Director of the ACLU of Maryland, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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