



City of Baltimore

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

Legislation Text

File #: 09-0121R, Version: 0

* 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: President Rawlings-Blake

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Baltimore City Police Department - Online Transparency - Reporting Systems for Officer Related Shootings and Preliminary Crime Statistics

FOR the purpose of requesting the Baltimore City Police Department to implement online reporting systems to disclose the final internal investigation results of officer-related shootings and monthly preliminary crime statistics, to provide a greater level transparency to the citizens of Baltimore.

Recitals

On January 5, 2009, the Baltimore City Police Department rescinded its policy to release the names of police officers involved in justified departmental shootings. In a January 29, 2009 letter to the City Council, Commissioner Bealefeld stated that “the decision as to whether or not to disclose the identity of the officer will be made after the internal investigation of the incident has been completed”. Since that time the Baltimore Police Department has announced that the new policy is under review and may be altered.

As the Baltimore Police Department reviews the policy for disclosing information related to police-involved shootings, serious consideration should be given to a new approach adopted by the Chicago Police Department. Outlined in the March 6, 2009 edition of the Chicago Tribune, the Chicago Police Department now releases investigations reports via the Internet. Accessible through the Department’s Independent Police Review Authority website, these reports detail incidents of officer related shootings but omit the personal information of officers and witnesses. In the same March 6th article of the Tribune, the Chief Administrator of the Independent Police Review Authority stated that “with transparency, you can have informed discussions about whether something is right or wrong”.

As the safety of Baltimore’s valiant men and women in law enforcement must be fiercely guarded, a policy limiting immediate full disclosure may be warranted. However, with a street culture that tolerates blatant witness intimidation, the City must continue to rely on its citizens as a valuable partner in crime reduction. By not disclosing important, relevant information regarding police-involved shootings, even after internal investigations are complete, we handicap a priceless asset in fighting crime on Baltimore’s streets: trust between the police and the public.

Similarly, in an effort to build trust with communities, police departments across the nation are now becoming more transparent by providing monthly preliminary crime statistics reports via the Internet. For example, the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department's website provides up-to-date preliminary crime statistics including recent arrest activity as well as the current number of homicides, firearm recoveries, robberies and assaults. The reports also include prior year comparisons.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That this Body respectfully requests the Baltimore City Police Department to implement online reporting systems to disclose the final internal investigation results of officer-related shootings and monthly preliminary crime statistics, to provide a greater level transparency to the citizens of Baltimore.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Police Commissioner report to the City Council on the progress of these programs and after implementation, annual reports on the usage of the systems within the Police Department and by the public.

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

dlr09-686b~intro/19Mar09
ccres/online/AS

dlr09-686b~intro/19Mar09
????
ccres/online/AS