



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Conaway

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Request for State Action - Screening of Prison Workers for Gang Affiliations

FOR the purpose of requesting that the State Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services improve efforts to screen prison workers for gang affiliations.

Recitals

The activities of criminal gangs pose a significant and growing threat both in Baltimore and throughout Maryland. The FBI estimates that the 350 violent gangs operating in Maryland have nearly 8,000 active members, and the Justice Department's National Gang Intelligence Center estimated earlier this year that up to 80% of crimes in communities across the nation are committed by gang members.

Many of these gangs have presences in prisons or even originated behind bars. The FBI believes that 75% of Maryland gangs are active in prisons. Maryland's Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services admits that "many gangs are using the prison system as a recruiting ground, building their numbers and jeopardizing the safety of our institutions and the communities to which they will return." Worse, inmates are increasingly finding ways to direct the criminal activities of gangs beyond the prison walls. Here in Baltimore, inmates have been proven to have run sophisticated drug operations or ordered gang killings from behind bars.

Recent media reports have indicated that in some cases prison workers are not just unable to stop this activity, they have in fact been active members of the criminal gangs run by inmates. Three Baltimore prison guards recently admitted to being members of the Black Guerilla Family prison gang, after being indicted by federal prosecutors, and documents filed in an unrelated federal case indicate that more than a dozen other guards are suspected of ties to either the BGF or Bloods gangs. Prison staff in both Maryland and throughout the nation are frequent conduits for cell phones used by inmates to direct gang activities and for other contraband used by prison based gangs.

This misconduct by gang affiliated prison workers is simply unacceptable. It undermines the work of the law enforcement personnel and witnesses who step up and put their lives on the line to remove dangerous gang members from our communities. The State must do a better job of preventing the infiltration of gang members into positions of responsibility in our correctional institutions. These conduits for gang leaders' communications with the

criminals remaining behind on our streets must be removed.

A first step in weeding out gang members from the prison workforce would be to require all applicants for positions that require interaction with incarcerated individuals to state whether they are in any way affiliated with a gang. Asking this simple question would deter or prevent many infiltration attempts and lay the groundwork for the termination of any prison workers later found to be gang affiliates.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services is requested to work with the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the 2010 Maryland General Assembly to improve the screening of prison workers for gang affiliation, by explicitly requiring all applicants for positions that require interaction with incarcerated individuals to state whether they are in any way affiliated with a gang.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, the Mayor, the Governor, the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the 2010 Maryland General Assembly, the Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of State Relations, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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