



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Holton

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Baltimore City Safe Childhood Task Force

FOR the purpose of creating the Baltimore City Safe Childhood Task Force to review and evaluate Baltimore City's investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse, child neglect, and child sexual exploitation; to review local, state, and federal coordinated interagency response to address the physical, mental, and social needs of the victims and to ensure the proper adjudication and long-range supervision of the perpetrators; and to evaluate the effectiveness of current efforts to educate the public about the dangers our children face and the steps adults can take to ensure Baltimore City's children enjoy a safe and secure childhood.

Recitals

According to data recently released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HSS) in Child Maltreatment 2006, an annual report of data collected from the States' child protective services (CPS) agencies via the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, an estimated 905,000 children were found to be victims of abuse or neglect in fiscal year 2006, representing a rate of 12.1 per 1,000 children in the population. The number and rate of victims has decreased since 2002, when there were an estimated 910,000 victims at a rate of 12.3 per 1,000 children.

Prevent Child Abuse America, a national organization that provides leadership to promote and implement prevention efforts at both the national and local levels, reports that maltreatment led to the deaths of 1,530 children nationwide, an average of 4 children every day during the HSS reporting period. And, although Maryland did not provide statistics to either the HSS study or to Prevent Child Abuse America, recent media reports conclude that the maltreatment of children in this State led to the death of at least 6 children since 2003, despite the authorities' knowledge and official records of prior incidences of maltreatment.

State Secrecy and Child Deaths in the U.S., a joint report of the Children's Advocacy Institute and First Star concludes that Maryland is among the 10 worst states when it comes to releasing information to the public about child abuse in cases involving death or serious injury. The report warns that this lack of information constitutes a serious barrier to the social, legislative, and programmatic reforms that could address weaknesses in the system and more effectively prevent the maltreatment and deaths of children.

In Maryland, particularly in Baltimore City, The Children's Advocacy Project lists various agencies that provide services that constitute a network of child advocacy, victim treatment, and family support services. Among the entities that address child abuse are:

- Baltimore Child Abuse Center (BCAC) - An award winning organization created, in 1986, to improve investigations and reduce the harmful effects of child sexual abuse on children and families. The Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office, the Baltimore Police Department, and the Baltimore City Department of Social Services have developed a protocol that provides for 1 interview for victims and serves all child sexual abuse victims in Baltimore as the central point of contact and case management between all reporting sexual abuse agencies.
- Baltimore City Child Protective Services - A specialized social service aimed to protect the child and assist parents in providing proper care and attention and to remedy and decrease the risk of continuing abuse and neglect. Also provides for alternative placements.
- Family and Children's Services of Central Maryland - Offers child sexual abuse treatment programs to children who have experienced various forms of child sexual abuse (sexual, physical, or emotional). Therapists and case managers help families overcome barriers to treatment as well as provide advocacy and support services in home and school. Provides domestic violence individual and group counseling for victims and children, court accompaniment, case management outreach, and emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence.
- Family Center of the Kennedy Krieger Institute - The Kennedy Krieger Family Center provides mental health and support services for children, adolescents, and families who experience or may be at risk for trauma through the effects of abuse, neglect, and environmental factors. The multi disciplinary staff includes child psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, clinical social workers, certified professional counselors, early childhood teachers, family advocates, and recreational therapy assistants.
- Family Connections - Targets families with children between the ages of 5 and 11 who are considered to be at risk for child abuse. Staff works with families on problem-solving, positive discipline methods, coping strategies, developing social supports and community connections, and opportunities for positive family interactions through community activities.
- The Awareness Center, Inc. - A Jewish Coalition Against Sexual Abuse/Assault dedicated to providing education, information, and resources to survivors of sexual violence and their family members.
- The Family Tree - Is dedicated to breaking the cycle of child abuse and neglect through child, family, and community-based advocacy, and outreach services.

To ensure that Baltimore City's children are being protected and served to the utmost ability of the system and its protocols, the Baltimore Child Safe Task Force will initiate its work with a review of available services currently available to victims of child abuse and neglect to identify strengths, discover gaps, and provide a forum for citizens to share accolades, concerns, and recommendations. The Baltimore Child Safe Task Force will ultimately determine what further course of action is needed to best advocate for Baltimore City's most vulnerable children to ensure that their homes, their schools, and their neighborhoods are, indeed, child safe.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Baltimore City Safe Childhood Task Force is created to review and evaluate Baltimore City's investigative, administrative, and

judicial handling of cases of child abuse, child neglect, and child sexual exploitation; to review local, state, and federal coordinated, interagency, response to address the physical, mental, and social needs of the victims and to ensure the proper adjudication and long-range supervision of the perpetrators; and to evaluate the effectiveness of current efforts to educate the public about the dangers our children face and the steps adults can take to ensure Baltimore City's children enjoy a safe and secure childhood.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That membership on the Baltimore City Child Safe Task Force will include, but not be limited to, representatives of:

- the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office
- the Baltimore City Police Department
- the Baltimore City Department of Social Services
- the Baltimore City Public School System
- the Baltimore City Council
- the Mayor's Coordinating Council on Criminal Justice
- the Baltimore City Health Department.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Senate and House Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly, the Baltimore City State's Attorney, the Baltimore City Police Commissioner, the Director of the Baltimore City Department of Social Services, the CEO of the Baltimore City Public School System, the Executive Director of the Mayor's Coordinating Council on Criminal Justice, the Baltimore City Health Department, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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