



## Legislation Text

---

**File #:** 10-0200R, **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: Councilmember Branch

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning  
**Informational Hearing - Baltimore Police Department Crime Lab**

FOR the purpose of requesting the Baltimore Police Commissioner, the Director of the Baltimore Police Crime Lab, the Director of Finance, and the Baltimore City State's Attorney to address the Council on the operations of the Baltimore Crime Lab; to report on the reliability and integrity of current DNA testing protocol; and to assess the impact of any staffing shortages on the outcome of cases being processed throughout the criminal justice system.

Recitals

In August 2008, it was widely reported that employee contamination of DNA evidence, which led to the dismissal of the Crime Lab director at that time, could call into question the professionalism of the state's biggest and busiest crime lab and further erode the public's already tenuous confidence in the City's ability to deliver a fair and impartial criminal justice process.

In fact, the following January 2009, a defense attorney unsuccessfully tried to argue for a new trial in the case of a young man accused of killing a Baltimore police officer based on the DNA cross-contamination in the Crime Lab. Once again Crime Lab staff had to testify as to the legitimacy of the Lab's findings and defend the integrity of personnel and process.

Although the Baltimore Police Department Crime Lab reportedly received a positive review of operations by the Society of Crime Laboratory Directors, the Innocent Project, which has been instrumental in freeing persons falsely convicted, largely on the basis of DNA evidence, called for the Maryland State Police to investigate the Lab's management that same month.

Media reports of the findings of an independent audit released around the same time by the Police Department did little to restore public confidence, finding that "the lab was inadequately staffed, equipment to analyze narcotics had long been out of order, faulty paperwork sometimes made it difficult to establish a chain of custody for evidence, and evidence was stored in rooms that were too warm, which could cause it to degrade."

January 2010, may have ushered in a new era of improved forensics throughout Maryland. At a joint news

conference the Maryland State Police Superintendent and the Baltimore Police Commissioner announced that “by eliminating the offender sample backlog and passing legislation requiring persons arrested for violent crimes to submit samples, Maryland’s DNA database is operating more efficiently than ever before and is helping dedicated law enforcement personnel in Baltimore and across the state to unlock the secrets of crime scene evidence and bring those responsible for violent crime in Maryland to justice.”

Baltimore City Police reportedly received funding from the Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention to hire additional staff to help process more DNA evidence. This, and news of continued improvements, would seem to indicate that conditions at Baltimore’s Police Crime Lab are improving.

In a City where the relationship between law enforcement and the citizenry is tenuous at best, a criminal investigation system must be as near perfect as is humanly possible.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Baltimore Police Commissioner, the Director of the Baltimore Police Crime Lab, the Director of Finance, and the Baltimore City State’s Attorney are requested to address the Council on the operations of the Baltimore Crime Lab; to report on the reliability and integrity of current DNA testing protocol; and to assess the impact of any staffing shortages on the outcome of cases being processed throughout the criminal justice system.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Baltimore Police Commissioner, the Director of the Baltimore Police Crime Lab, the Director of Finance, the Baltimore City State’s Attorney, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

dlr 10-1052~intro/07Apr10  
ccres/Crmlab/nf

dlr 10-1052~intro/07Apr10  
?????  
ccres/Crmlab/nf