



Legislation Text

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Introductory*

City of Baltimore Council Bill R (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Cohen

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning
The Reunification of Families

For the purpose of calling on the Federal Government to immediately reunify all families separated under the “zero tolerance” immigration policy, to end contracts with private prisons and jurisdictions benefitting from the incarceration of families, and to reconstitute and repurpose ICE; calling on Governor Hogan and the State of Maryland to ensure no State resources are used to separate families and calling on jurisdictions around the State to disentangle local law enforcement from immigration enforcement; and for the purpose of expressing Baltimore’s opposition to the separation and prolonged detention of families.

Whereas, Baltimore City has benefitted culturally, socially, and economically from the diversity of its residents, including more than 45,000 immigrants from around the world.

Whereas, In 2011, to recognize and uphold the constitutional rights of immigrants to be protected against unreasonable seizures, the Baltimore City Council passed a resolution in opposition to the federal Secure Communities Program.

Whereas, The Mayor of Baltimore issued an executive order in 2012 to establish policies of the Baltimore City Police Department and all city agencies to protect access to police protection and public services regardless of immigration status.

Whereas, In 2017, to reaffirm Baltimore City’s continuing commitment to advocate for and support the well being of all residents, the Baltimore City Council passed a resolution for the purpose of affirming the City of Baltimore as a Welcoming City that promotes policies and programs to foster inclusion for all.

Whereas, In 2018 the Trump administration announced a “zero tolerance” immigration policy. As a result of that policy, from April 19 to May 31, 2018, the administration separated over 2,000 families, many of whom came to this country fleeing violence and seeking asylum.

Whereas, Lawyers working with the immigrants reported that a breastfeeding baby was taken from an immigrant mother; and, although DHS denies separating babies from adults, officials declined to specify an age at which they would not separate immigrant children from parents.

Whereas, Parents and children in our own city have been separated, including an individual who was apprehended while dropping his child off at school.

Whereas, Separating children from their families is unjust, unnecessary, and can cause mental and physical injury to both the child and the parent.

Whereas, On June 26, 2018, a federal judge ordered federal officials to stop detaining parents apart from their children, to reunify all parents with their minor children who are under the age of 5 by July 10, 2018, and to reunify all parents with their minor children age 5 and older by July 26, 2018.

Whereas, We stand with Maryland Attorney General Frosh in his efforts to compel the Trump Administration to reunify the families separated under the “zero tolerance” policy.

Whereas, The federal government has committed to detain families in private detention centers and has yet to announce a plan to reunite families that have been separated.

Whereas, Prosecuting and detaining people who seek asylum, refugee status, or economic freedom is un-American and contravenes the principles upon which our country was founded.

Whereas, We seek to ensure that our communities have the opportunity to thrive - which includes maintaining our infrastructure, creating good jobs, and providing a quality education for our children. We are responsible for the safety of everyone in our communities, yet the presence of ICE in our neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, places of worship, courthouses, and homes, makes this impossible.

Whereas, ICE commits human rights violations; oversteps its authority and skirts the law; enriches private prison corporations that house immigrants; targets vulnerable populations; threatens elected officials and activists who challenge it; diverts scarce local resources to federal enforcement; and systematically avoids accountability and transparency.

Whereas, The City of Baltimore embraces and welcomes individuals of diverse racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, and national backgrounds.

Whereas, The City of Baltimore advocates for comprehensive immigration reform through its federal legislative agenda, which urges the United States Congress to enact immigration reform that provides a realistic pathway to citizenship, works to keep families of immigrants intact, promotes public safety, national security, and economic prosperity, and respects human rights and civil liberties, as noted in Council Bill 06-0170R.

Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the City of Baltimore strongly opposes any policy that results in the separation of children from their parents or siblings or that results in the prolonged detention of families, via border enforcement, interior enforcement, or travel restrictions based on religion, race, ethnicity, or country of origin.

And be it further resolved, That the City of Baltimore calls on Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Homeland Security Secretary Kristjen Nielsen, and the federal government to support policies that keep families together, provide for the immediate reunification of families already separated, and put an end to the “zero tolerance” policy of criminalizing immigrants based simply on their entry to the U.S.

And be it further resolved, That the City of Baltimore calls on Secretary Nielson and the federal government to end contracts with private prisons and local and state jurisdictions who benefit financially from the incarceration of people due to the “zero tolerance” policy.

And be it further resolved, That the City of Baltimore calls on Governor Hogan and the State of Maryland

to ensure that no state resources are used in any way to support or facilitate the separation of families through collaboration with ICE, CBP, or any other federal agency that results in the deportation or detention in State facilities, including the Baltimore City Detention Center, of immigrant adults, families, or children.

And be it further resolved, That the City of Baltimore calls on its sister jurisdictions across the state of Maryland to disentangle their local law enforcement and corrections personnel and resources from immigration enforcement to the greatest extent possible. We further call on Governor Hogan to support these efforts.

And be it further resolved, That the City of Baltimore calls on the federal government to reconstitute and repurpose ICE, from a federal agency that has traumatized families in our city and across the country to an agency that truly protects our communities from international crime syndicates and human trafficking and that is consistent with the values enumerated above.