Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title: COVID-19 Update
For the purpose of updating Baltimore City residents on the state of the COVID-19 pandemic and outlining the City Council's recommendations going forward.

Sponsors: Mayor Brandon M. Scott, Kristerfer Burnett, Sharon Green Middleton, Leon F. Pinkett, III, Robert Stokes, Sr., Shannon Sneed, Edward Reisinger, John T. Bullock, Bill Henry, Mary Pat Clarke, Zeke Cohen, Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer, Ryan Dorsey

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Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
4/6/2020	0	City Council	Adopted	
4/6/2020	0	City Council	Introduced	

*** 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 Scott

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning
COVID-19 Update
For the purpose of updating Baltimore City residents on the state of the COVID-19 pandemic and outlining the City Council's recommendations going forward.

Recitals

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit Maryland. Due to the extreme threat that the virus poses to the health and well-being of all those in our state and city, Governor Hogan declared a State of Emergency on March 5 after three cases of the virus were diagnosed in Montgomery County. Mayor Young declared a State of Emergency on March 18, after 5 cases were diagnosed in the City. As of April 6, there were over 1,300,000 confirmed cases worldwide, with over 340,000 confirmed cases in the United States, 4,045 confirmed cases in Maryland, and 435 confirmed cases in Baltimore City. Of those cases, there have been over 70,000 deaths worldwide, over 10,000 deaths in the United States, 91 deaths in Maryland, and 8 deaths in Baltimore City.

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The Baltimore City Council recognizes that certain groups are more vulnerable to the virus than others. The elderly and people with compromised immune systems are most likely to become severely ill or die from the virus, although severe symptoms and death can occur in young people and generally healthy people as well. Some conditions that make people especially susceptible to complications from the virus include lung disease, diabetes, and heart disease. Individuals with asthma may also suffer severe symptoms from the virus, as COVID-19 makes breathing difficult in symptomatic individuals.

Unfortunately many Baltimore City residents suffer from these diseases and therefore are at high risk of severe illness or death if they are infected. The living circumstances of individuals can also contribute to increased vulnerability to the virus. Homeless individuals particularly are at risk, as they cannot practice social distancing well without a home and if they seek services at a homeless shelter, they may have to sleep on cots close to other individuals who have the virus.

Since the pandemic hit the U.S., the economy has been highly unstable. Over the past several weeks there have been several record-breaking days of losses. After the House of Representatives and the Senate passed, and the President signed, a $2 trillion stimulus bill, the stock market rallied a little, but it is likely that our country is now facing a recession. The Pew Research Center estimates that nearly 1 in 4 Americans is employed in an industry that will feel an immediate impact from COVID-19. Retail and food service workers are the most vulnerable. Maryland's unemployment claims have soared - during the week of March 21, 38,000 new claims were filed. The economic pains from the market downturn due to the virus are unlikely to end anytime soon.

In conjunction with the market downturn, Americans are also being hit by price gouging. Many Americans are stocking up on supplies so as to make fewer shopping trips and to practice social distancing more effectively. Because of this, some basic supplies that many households require or want have become scarce. Some stores have capitalized on this problem by raising the prices of products like milk, bread, and toilet paper to ridiculous heights. About 40 states have laws against price gouging, including Maryland. The Maryland General Assembly recently passed, and Governor Hogan signed, legislation expanding Attorney General Frosh's authority to go after price gouging. Violators can face fines of up to $10,000.

Due to pandemic and its effects on our City, the City Council recommends the following:

- That the State publish data on confirmed cases and deaths from COVID-19 by race;

- That the State declare a moratorium on rent increases for the duration of the State of Emergency and retroactive to the beginning of the declaration of the State of Emergency;

- That the State declare a moratorium on late fees for rent and for the moratorium to extend to 90 days after the end of the State of Emergency;

- That the State extend the Executive Order prohibiting evictions to 90 days after the end of the State of Emergency;

- That the federal government extend the moratorium on foreclosures and evictions for homeowners with mortgages backed by the Federal Housing Administration, Freddie Mac, or Fannie Mae until June 30;

- That the federal government provide funding for a rent forgiveness program to assist residents who are financially impacted by the pandemic;

- That the State extend the Executive Order prohibiting utility termination services and late fees to 90 days after the end of the State of Emergency;

- That unoccupied City-owned properties be used as housing for people experiencing homelessness during

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the State of Emergency;

- That the federal government ban financial institutions from instituting fines on customers or dinging customers' credit scores during the pandemic;

- That the federal government work in tandem with the states to remove charges for cashing checks during the pandemic;

- That the Baltimore City Health Department create a toll-free hotline for mental health needs to be staffed by social workers, psychologists, and other mental health professionals;

- That the State pause and prohibit all repossessions until 90 days after the State of Emergency; and

- That the State provides free transportation through the MTA for all essential employees during the State of Emergency.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the City Council updates Baltimore City residents on the state of the COVID-19 pandemic and outlines the City Council's recommendations going forward.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor, the Mayor, the Honorable Members of Congress representing Baltimore City, the Health Commissioner, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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