



City of Baltimore

City Council
City Hall, Room 408
100 North Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Harris

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Investigative Hearing - Teen Killers/Teen Victims - An Alarming Trend

FOR the purpose of examining the disturbing trend of increasing numbers of young people both committing murder and becoming the victims of homicide, by requesting the Baltimore City State's Attorney to share the results of a study by the Juvenile Division on the causes of violence and victimization, calling on the Executive Director of the Baltimore City Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to give an overview of juvenile offenders and victims, and urging the CEO, Baltimore City Public School System, the Director, Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks, and the Executive Director of the Office of Children, Youth and Families to offer insights into the educational, behavioral, and social condition of our Baltimore City youth.

Recitals

November 18: "8th-Grader Charged in Girl's Killing - She was fatally stabbed Nov. 7 walking from the light rail station"; November 19: "Reporting Deaths of 2 Teens Caught in a Tide of Violence"; November 22: "Camera Catches Homicide Suspect - Police use video to identify teen in killing of man asleep on bench in West Baltimore" - so ran the headlines in local papers from Saturday to Wednesday, leading Baltimore parents of teens to give heartfelt thanks that their kids were alive and well to join in family celebrations of the November 23rd Thanksgiving holiday.

According to national statistics reported by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and local information supplied by Baltimore City Police, a family that has not been touched by juvenile crime is, indeed, fortunate. Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report states that homicide is one of the leading causes of juvenile death in the United States and that, on average, between 1980 and 2002, about 2,000 juveniles were murdered annually. The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that homicide was the 4th leading cause of death for children ages 1-11 in 2002, and the 3rd leading cause of death for juveniles ages 12-17.

Statistics reported by local law enforcement, however, point to the sobering fact that the Baltimore City teen murder and victimization rate eclipses the national trend. In just this past year, the number of juveniles slain - 21 people ages 17 and under - far exceeds last year's total of 13, the lowest since 1984. Also, tragically, a total of 21 young

people under 18 have been charged in killings in the City so far this year, nearly doubling the total number of those charged in all of 2005. According to information reportedly released by the Office of the State's Attorney, 8 of those charged are 15-year-olds.

The spate of juvenile committing killings has prompted exigent action by the State's Attorney who released a statement on November 21 that read, in part:

"The increasing number of juveniles charged as adults in homicide cases in Baltimore are cause for great community concern - not only because of the chilling facts outlined in these allegations, and the public safety concerns that these cases highlight, but also because a new profile is emerging, that of a younger, more violent offender, who has evaded many of the traditional assessments and treatment opportunities for early intervention and prevention of high-risk behaviors.

This emerging profile must be assessed and analyzed by all of our juvenile justice and social service agencies and allied educational organizations with a unified goal to stop this wave of violence and victimization to our fragile, youthful generation.

Today I contacted several law enforcement and community partners to meet with me to review new trends and factors that need immediate attention and understanding. Over the next week, I will convene a series of meetings to discuss my observations, assessments and analysis of the facts. I have requested a detailed analysis of key indicators in the murder cases in 2006. I moved today to re-assign staff to conduct our assessment.

Over the next several weeks I will keep the community informed regarding the scope and content of our meetings and the policy issues that need to be addressed so that together we can build a safer Baltimore for our future generations."

The information compiled as a result of the State's Attorney's investigation will present insight into the circumstances that lead to so many of our youth becoming victims and victimizing others. In inviting the agencies to share in the investigation, the Council will expand understanding of a troubling phenomenon that is added to the many negative influences that our children must have our unmitigated commitment to successfully overcome.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That this Body will fully examine the disturbing trend of increasing numbers of young people both committing murder and becoming the victims of homicide, by requesting the Baltimore City State's Attorney to share the results of a study by the Juvenile Division on the causes of violence and victimization, by calling on the Executive Director, Baltimore City Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to give an overview of juvenile offenders and victims, and by urging the CEO, Baltimore City Public School System, the Director, Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks, and the Executive Director of the Office of Children, Youth and Families to offer insights into the educational, behavioral, and social condition of our Baltimore City youth.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Baltimore City State's Attorney, the Executive Director, Baltimore City Coordinating Council on Criminal Justice, the CEO, Baltimore City Public School System, the Director, Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks, the Executive Director, Office of Children, Youth, and Families, and the Youth Commission.

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- 2 -

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