



# City of Baltimore

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

## Legislation Text

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**File #: 07-0329R, Version: 0**

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EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.

Strike out indicates matter deleted by amendment.

CITY OF BALTIMORE

COUNCIL BILL 07-0329R

(Resolution)

Introduced by:

Councilmembers Holton, Young

Introduced and read first time: September 17, 2007

Assigned to: Public Safety Subcommittee

REFERRED TO

THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Department of Recreation and Parks, Youth Commissioner, Police Commissioner, State's Attorney's Office

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

**An Invitation to Engage in Constructive Dialogue - Baltimore City Youth: Why Are Some of Your Pants Hanging So Low?**

FOR the purpose of inviting Baltimore City's youth to engage in dialogue with members of the City Council, parents, grandparents, teachers, mentors, members of the faith-based community, juvenile justice professionals, and other interested parties to address the popular practice of wearing certain kinds of clothing, such as baggy, low hanging pants, and other fashions that adults find socially and esthetically objectionable; to explore the historical and social implication of such practices that give rise to and reinforce negative stereotyping and form the basis for society's objections; and to ascertain if legislation similar to that introduced in state and local legislatures across the country is a desirable, meaningful, and effective means of dealing with this and other issues that threaten to divide youth and adults and impede young people from garnering the respect they desire and deserve.

Recitals

A popular fad among America's youth is wending its way across the country, followed closely by state and local legislative attempts to, first, define the offensive behavior, and secondly, to provide non-draconian sanctions to discourage youth from engaging in expressions of personal style and adopting clothing fads that are deemed, by their elders, to be inappropriate attire for appearance in public.

A Dallas, Texas School Board trustee sought to ban pants worn so low that underwear shows. The town of Delcambre, Louisiana enacted a much broader ordinance to prohibit persons "in any public place or in view of the public" from being "in dress not becoming his or her sex, or in any indecent exposure of his or her person or undergarments." A City Council member in Atlanta, Georgia proposed to amend that City's indecency laws to address a larger array of sartorial offenses, making baggy pants that show boxer shorts, showing the strap of a thong above the pant line, wearing jogging bras in public, or showing bra straps illegal.

On the state level, the Virginia House of Delegates reported favorably a bill that would make it illegal to display "below-waist undergarments, intended to cover a person's intimate parts, in a lewd or indecent manner." In Louisiana, a state bill that would have made it "unlawful for any person to appear in public while wearing pants

below his or her waist and thereby exposing his or her skin or intimate clothing" failed after it was amended to exempt sagging pants worn by workers, an amendment that was dubbed "the plumber's amendment".

Regardless of how the practice is defined, the objection to wearing pants "hanging down" below the natural waist line is based on more than preference for a more traditional mode of dress. Many parents object to their children adopting a style that emulates the behavior of criminals. As reported by the Associated Press "sagging is believed to have originated with California prison inmates who were denied belts and had to hold their trousers up. It spread to hip-hop and "gangsta" rap culture and appeals to those who want to project a tough-guy image." Another version holds that California probationers and parolees began wearing baggy, loose-fitting pants to conceal the GPS monitoring devices they were ordered to wear.

While personal expression and individuality are traits parents and adults encourage in today's youth, behaviors that perpetuate negative images and stereotypes are not. As we work to provide positive role models and assist our cherished youth in the quest to become happy healthy, contributing members of society, it is troublesome when the youth choose to, knowingly or unknowingly, emulate behaviors of those who threaten the well-being of and prey upon the law-abiding members of that society.

While youth and adults will not agree on every issue, we must respect those differences and continue to respect each other. Keeping an open dialogue is the first step in gaining mutual understanding and in possibly reaching a compromise on which all parties can agree. Let's talk about it!

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That this Body hereby invites Baltimore City's youth to engage in dialogue with members of the City Council, parents, grandparents, teachers, mentors, members of the faith-based community, juvenile justice professionals, and other interested parties to address the popular practice of wearing certain kinds of clothing, such as baggy, low hanging pants, and other fashions that adults find socially and esthetically objectionable; to explore the historical and social implication of such practices that give rise to and reinforce negative stereotyping and form the basis for society's objections; and to ascertain if legislation similar to that introduced in state and local legislatures across the country is a desirable, meaningful, and effective means of dealing with this and other issues that threaten to divide youth and adults and impede young people from garnering the respect they desire and deserve.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor; the Governor; the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly; the Baltimore City State's Attorney; the Baltimore Police Commissioner; Director, Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks; Director, Maryland Department of Juvenile Justice; Director, the Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies; Director, Community Law Center, Inc.; Dean, University of Maryland Law School; Dean, University of Baltimore Law School; and the administrative offices of BUILD, the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, BRIDGE, the Baltimore Council of PTAs, the Baltimore and Vicinity AME Ministerial Alliance, the 40 West Ministerial Alliance, CURE, the Baltimore Branch of the NAACP, the Baltimore City Council Youth Commission, the Algebra Project, the Baltimore Education Network, Safe and Sound, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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