



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: President Young

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Investigative Hearing - Police Department Staffing Concerns

FOR the purpose of calling on the Police Commissioner and representatives from the Department of Finance to appear before the City Council to discuss the Police Department's short and long term staffing plan, the number of officers available for duty versus the authorized strength of the force, the Police Department's use of overtime to fill staffing gaps, and how staffing policies and projections impact the Police Department's ability to protect the public.

Recitals

Staffing levels and deployments have long been a source of concern at the Baltimore City Police Department, and there are indications that the situation is currently worsening rather than improving. Presently, the Department has hundreds of vacancies, putting it at roughly 75% of its authorized strength.

This manpower shortage can be exacerbated by inefficient deployment patterns, as well as the prolonged presence of numerous officers on suspended-with-pay lists. For one reason or another, the Police Department all too often does not have enough officers to achieve goals that its authorized strength, one of the highest ratios of officers to residents in the nation, would appear to make easily achievable.

Attempting to meet the Department's goals, and keep Baltimore's citizens safe, with the actual resources available costs the City large amounts of overtime pay, damages officer morale, and reduces the Department's ability to protect the public. This, in turn, contributes to unacceptably high attrition rates among veteran officers, and difficulties in recruiting new officers, that serve to further worsen the staffing problems.

There are certainly steps that could be taken to help the Department break out of this vicious cycle. For instance, some have questioned the efficiency and impartiality of the Department's internal investigations that can leave officers in limbo for long periods of time, costing the City money and helping neither the Department nor the officers' careers. Some have suggested that improvements here could save money, reduce staffing uncertainty, and bolster morale. The Department's leadership has successfully lobbied for hundreds of thousands of City dollars for outside consultants to review deployment patterns for inefficiencies, and personnel policies for opportunities for

improvement. And the administration has repeatedly called for, and funded, efforts to recruit more officers.

All of these approaches doubtless have merit, but it is not clear at the moment whether any of them alone, or in combination, are being pursued in a way that will improve the situation over both the short and long term. With the Police Department's staffing plan so central to the Department's ability to keep Baltimoreans safe, and so many ideas being floated about how to improve it, it is vital that the Council be kept apprised of how the Commissioner intends to address these staffing issues going forward.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council calls on the Police Commissioner and representatives from the Department of Finance to appear before it to discuss the Police Department's short and long term staffing plan, the number of officers available for duty versus the authorized strength of the force, the Police Department's use of overtime to fill staffing gaps, and how staffing policies and projections impact the Police Department's ability to protect the public.

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

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