



Legislation Text

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Introduced by: Councilmember Clarke

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning **Informational Hearing - Homeless Outreach Efforts**

For the purpose of inviting representatives from the Mayor's Office of Human Services, the Health Department, and Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore, along with other providers of homeless outreach, to discuss the need for and current status of professional intervention for homeless people without shelter in Baltimore City.

Recitals

Nationally, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates at least 610,000 people find themselves in shelters, on the streets, or in other places unfit for human habitation on any given night in the United States - a number that does not include the hundreds of thousands who are hidden from public sight or unstably "doubled up" with family and friends, to include a growing number of children and families. Indeed, another report from the National Center on Family Homelessness found 2.5 million children experienced homelessness each year.

In Baltimore City, recent counts of people experiencing homelessness have reported between 2,600 and 4,100 people without housing on any given night - a small fraction of the number served annually by the City's homeless service providers.

These surveys also report that the three top health concerns that impact the homeless population in the City of Baltimore are substance abuse, mental health, and chronic illness - all of which are significantly and negatively impacted by homelessness. A 2005 study by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council found that this "tri-morbidity" of substance abuse and mental illness together with chronic health problems increases the risk of early death. Because of this compounding effect, people experiencing homelessness are 3 to 4 times more likely to die prematurely than their housed counterparts and have an average life expectancy of between 42 and 52 years old.

With homelessness so strongly linked to premature death and other serious health risks, it is vital that providers make every effort to reach out to this population and proactively seek to connect them with the services that they need. City and Federal sources have allocated millions of dollars to local providers to support these essential outreach efforts.

Since homelessness is a persistent problem that is too often ignored, it is important that the Council make every effort to keep it at the forefront of decision makers minds. With too few resources allocated to this complicated issue, it is vitally important to ensure that all of those resources are being employed in the most effective way possible. In particular, a clearer understanding of how government funds are being used to provide professional interventions into homeless people without shelter in Baltimore City is needed.

Homelessness is a problem that requires constant engagement, cooperative efforts amongst many

stakeholders, and a focused approach to making use of scant resources where they can do the most good. Periodic discussions about how well the City's approach meets these principles, and where improvements can be made, are essential if Baltimore is ever to achieve its goal of making homelessness a rare and brief experience.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the Council invites representatives from the Mayor's Office of Human Services, the Health Department, and Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore, along with other providers of homeless outreach, to discuss the need for and current status of professional intervention for homeless people without shelter in Baltimore City.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Director of the Mayor's Office of Human Services, the Director of MOHS's Homeless Services Program, the Health Commissioner, the President and CEO of Behavioral Health System Baltimore, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.