



Legislation Text

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Introductory*

City of Baltimore Council Bill R (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmembers Clarke and Schleifer

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning **Investigative Hearing - Crossing Guard Cuts**

For the purpose of reviewing and helping reverse the recent annual reductions in crossing guard personnel, elimination of previously assigned crossing locations, and the proposed cutback of hours paid for crossing guard services.

Recitals

Crossing guards are an essential part of our public safety system, protecting the smallest and youngest of our citizens. These crossing guards are their first - and often only - line of defense against the dangers they may encounter moving between the safer and more controlled environments of school and home. Unfortunately, at current and projected funding levels, there are simply not enough of them or enough crossing locations to provide the protection our children and their families need and deserve.

Loss of 64 funded positions and numerous crossing locations since 2015-16

- In school year 2015-16, the City funded 321 crossing guard positions, including 33 substitutes.
- In the current school year, the number shrank to 290, with substitutes eliminated.
- In the 2017-18 school year, Finance projects 290 funded positions, again with no substitutes, representing a loss of 64 positions in two years.

But that's just positions funded!

- Last year, only 245 positions were actually filled, plus 33 substitutes.
- This year, only 246 filled, with no substitutes.
- For the 2017-18 school year, Finance recommends 290 budgeted positions, no substitutes. We do not yet know how many positions will actually be filled.

To accommodate such steady annual defunding, Transportation has already eliminated a number of formerly protected corners, using as a major cut off criteria of school guard crossings used by fewer than 30

children.

Reduction of Crossing Guard Hours from 4 to 2 hours daily

Of urgent concern regarding our crossing guards is pending current negotiations, namely Finance's proposal to reduce their workday from a minimum of 4 to a minimum of 2 hours.

Although crossing guards may work fewer than the current 2 hours in the morning and 2 in the afternoon, this minimum payment was created and has been traditionally honored by the City for the following reasons:

1. The crossing guards must report to work in a "split shift" fashion, in the morning and again in the afternoon. This requires them to dress in uniforms twice daily, travel to their assigned locations twice daily, and remain on the job till the last child is safely crossed.
2. In addition, guards must report to and from a designated location to sign in and out each day, a "double reporting" which requires them to remain local for most of the day, placing limitations on their ability to make other plans or take other part-time jobs for the day.
3. Crossing guards need to be present for early-arriving and late-dismissing children and, especially in these difficult times, to run interference when troubles erupt.
4. Many current guards will be forced to seek alternative employment should their minimum hours and compensation be cut in half, leaving even more corners unprotected as the City undertakes challenging recruitment efforts to replace and retain them.
5. To pay them any less is not worth the pay and level of responsibility they have for the safety of Baltimore's children.

Substitutes are required to cover absences

In addition to full budget staffing, substitute crossing guards are important to add to the full-time projected budget, including a more efficient process for ensuring timely coverage, that is, for a crossing guard calling Transportation to report absence to also call the principal of their assigned school as well as the parent representative designated to recruit parent volunteers when substitutes are not available.

Now, more than ever, Crossing Guards are Needed

In recent months in Baltimore, schools and neighborhoods have overwhelmingly complained of dangerous increases in speeding traffic and have appealed for traffic calming such as speed humps, additional crosswalks, police traffic enforcement, more pedestrian-oriented traffic signals,- and restoration of former crossing guard locations at dangerous speedways.

Also, more and more, crossing guards intervene to prevent bullying among children and to help their charges navigate threatening obstacles to the safety of their travel.

In addition, in this era of school system deficits, a crucial State per-pupil funding formula helps dictate the adequacy of our local school budgets - which fiscally require an annual increase in the number of students enrolled in our schools. Reaching higher enrollment goals means even more students to protect in their travels to school and back home. Safe passage will be an important family consideration in deciding on the Baltimore City Public Schools.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, that the Council requests the Budget

Bureau and the Baltimore City Public Schools, local school leaders, and crossing guards themselves to appear at a City Council hearing to discuss the need to restore necessary crossing guard personnel and locations, 4-hour workdays, and safe passage for all Baltimore City students of all ages and how to accomplish these goals in the upcoming FY2018 budget.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Director of Finance, the CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools, the President of the City Union of Baltimore, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.