



## Legislation Text

File #: 17-0021R, Version: 0

\* **Warning:** This is an unofficial, introductory copy of the bill.  
The official copy considered by the City Council is the first reader copy.

### **Introductory\***

### **City of Baltimore Council Bill                      R (Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmember Stokes

### **A Resolution Entitled**

A Council Resolution concerning

### **Request for State Action - Require Presidential Candidates to Release Tax Returns**

For the purpose of supporting the longstanding tradition requiring that presidential candidates release tax return information to allow serious and informed discussion about their financial history, and calling on the General Assembly to adopt, and the Governor to sign, the Presidential Candidate Tax Transparency Act, or similar legislation, to give this tradition the force of law.

### **Recitals**

Leading presidential candidates from both major parties have voluntarily released multiple years of their tax returns for the better part of two generations. This gives voters an objective record to evaluate how they have earned their money, what conflicts of interest they would face if elected, what charities they support, and how they have conducted their finances.

Unfortunately, in the most recent election cycle this important tradition was not universally complied with, undermining the longstanding norm that disclosure of financial information is required of serious contenders to lead our nation.

Without tax information critics and supporters of presidential candidates are left without any objective facts with which to discuss important elements of a potential president's history, leading to speculation and unfounded assertions that demean our democratic process.

Now that this norm has been breached, we must decide whether to let it fall by the wayside for the future or reinforce it by giving the tradition legal force. A serious commitment to transparency in government, and debate based on facts rather than mere supposition, requires that every effort be made to restore access to this information.

Efforts are underway at the Federal level and in many states to require that presidential candidates release multiple years of tax returns in order to qualify to appear on the ballot. Here in Maryland, the Presidential Candidate Tax Transparency Act filed in the House as HB 517 and in the Senate as SB 358, would require a candidate for the office of President or Vice President of the United States to release a copy of the candidate's federal income tax return for at least the five most recent taxable years for which the candidate filed a return

with the Internal Revenue Service in order to appear on the ballot in Maryland. It is important that we join the nationwide effort to restore this important norm by passing this bill, or similar legislation, before the next presidential election cycle begins.

**Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore,** That the Council supports the longstanding tradition requiring that presidential candidates release tax return information to allow serious and informed discussion about their financial history, and calls on the General Assembly to adopt, and the Governor to sign, the Presidential Candidate Tax Transparency Act, or similar legislation, to give this tradition the force of law.

**And be it further resolved,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor, the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City House and Senate Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly, the President of the Maryland Senate, the Maryland House Speaker, the Mayor, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.