



City of Baltimore

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

Legislation Text

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The official copy considered by the City Council is the first reader copy.
Introductory*

City of Baltimore
Council Bill R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Clarke

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning
..title

Informational Hearing - Moving Baltimore to Zero Waste

For the purpose of requesting that representatives from the Department of Public Works, the Health Department, Baltimore City Public Schools, the Office of Sustainability, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and other City agencies involved with waste reduction efforts in Baltimore appear before the City Council, along with experts on Zero Waste efforts nationwide, to discuss the development of a Zero Waste plan for Baltimore that will advance sustainability, public health, and job creation.

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Recitals

Many of our most pressing environmental problems are, at heart, caused by waste and inefficiency in how we produce, distribute, and consume products. Eliminating or reducing this waste would yield huge dividends for our future. For example, waste-to-energy incinerators emit more CO₂ per unit of electricity than coal plants, making products from recycled materials rather than new raw materials can cut energy use by as much as 95%, and recycling programs support 6 to 10 times as many jobs as disposal efforts.

The closer we can get to eliminating waste, the greater the returns for our City, nation, and world. Zero Waste is an effort to maximize these returns by creating sustainable manufacturing and consumption cycles where all discarded materials can become resources for others to use. Communities throughout the United States, and around the world, have put together plans using Zero Waste principles that have achieved significant reductions in municipal waste, including the City of San Francisco's diversion of 80% of discarded material away from disposal.

Currently, the way we produce, consume, and dispose of our products and food accounts for 42% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions according to a recent study. Lowering these emissions is therefore essential to mitigating the effects of global warming that could be so devastating to the Earth, and especially to coastal areas such as Baltimore. Cities applying Zero Waste principles can double their waste diversion rates in just a few years. Portland, Oregon, a city similar in population to Baltimore, calculated that their early waste diversion efforts reduced greenhouse gas emissions by the equivalent of taking more than 438,000 cars off the road each year. Similar results should be achievable here as well.

Not only are the environmental benefits of Zero Waste efforts significant, they also produce significant economic gains. One study found that doubling the national recycling rate would create 1.5 million new well-paying, local, long-term jobs. By their nature, these jobs are overwhelmingly located in or near the communities increasing recycling.

Over time, Baltimore has made great strides in reducing its waste footprint and increasing recycling. But much more

could be done, particularly in our handling of discarded food and other organic waste. Baltimore needs to develop an effective, long-term, plan to move toward Zero Waste to support the continued health, well-being, and prosperity of our residents.

Although all communities are different and require unique approaches, the successes of many other cities in these efforts have created a robust and well-understood roadmap that Baltimore can learn from in its own efforts. These successes should be studied throughout City government so that their lessons can be applied to create our own Zero Waste plan.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the Council requests that representatives from the Department of Public Works, the Health Department, Baltimore City Public Schools, the Office of Sustainability, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and other City agencies involved with waste reduction efforts in Baltimore appear before it, along with experts on Zero Waste efforts nationwide, to discuss the development of a Zero Waste plan for Baltimore that will advance sustainability, public health, and job creation.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Director of Public Works, the Health Commissioner, the Acting Housing Commissioner, the CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools, the Office of Sustainability's Sustainability Coordinator, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.