



City of Baltimore

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

Legislation Text

File #: 18-0090R, 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: Councilmembers Clarke and Henry

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning

Investigative Hearing - Baltimore City Board of Liquor License Commissioners

For the purpose of calling upon the Board of Liquor License Commissioners for Baltimore City (BLLC) to prepare for and participate in a requested public hearing on the crucial issues raised by a coalition of North and Northeast Baltimore City community associations, including the need for improved Police Department-BLLC interagency communications and joint enforcement efforts to terminate Baltimore City liquor license establishments violating the safety and wellbeing of the neighborhoods where they are located.

Recitals

Whereas, a coalition of North and Northeast Baltimore City community associations have called upon the Baltimore City Council to schedule “a public hearing to hold accountable the commissioners and staff of the Board of Liquor License Commissioners for Baltimore City (BLLC)”.

Whereas, petitioning neighborhoods include Waverly Improvement Association, Oakenshawe Improvement Association, The Guilford Association, Abell Improvement Association, Charles Village Civic Association, Better Waverly Improvement Association, Winston-Govans Improvement Association, The Ednor Gardens-Lakeside Civic Association Board.

Whereas, these neighborhoods are joined as signatories by Karen DeCamp, Director of Community Programs, and Karen Stokes, Chief Executive Officer, Strong City Baltimore; Barbara & Hank Valieri, Baltimore Good Neighbors Coalition; State Senator Joan Carter Conway and State Delegates Maggie McIntosh and Mary Washington, and Baltimore City Councilwoman Mary Pat Clarke.

Whereas, these petitioners call for a City Council hearing because, although the BLLC is a State agency, the commissioners are appointed by the Mayor and the City Council President, and its staff are Civil Service employees of Baltimore City.

Whereas, The stated reason for this widespread and deeply-felt petition is that “the BLLC has failed Baltimore communities.”

· “First, the BLLC has failed to set up efficient and effective systems of communication with the

Baltimore Police Department (BPD)”; and,

· “Second, the BLLC has failed communities by insisting that communities engage in time-consuming and burdensome mediation with licensees; rather, the BLLC should use its own powers of enforcement and regulation to improve public health”.

Whereas, regarding a failure of effective communication with the BPD, petitioners state that “Interagency BLLC-BPD cooperation almost exclusively focuses on joint underage drinking investigations with the BPD’s Vice Unit. Unfortunately, because of this exclusive focus, complaints regarding violence, drug dealing, and other serious public health and safety concerns at liquor-licensed establishments do not make it before the commissioners for violation hearings”.

Whereas, also because of this focus, petitioners observe, “The Board prioritizes 311 complaints over 911 complaints, creating a perverse system in which the Board is more likely to hold a violation hearing for minor nuisance issues than for dangerous crimes”.

Whereas, regarding the second objection to mediation in lieu of enforcement, petitioners acknowledge the sometimes useful function of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), under the right circumstances, between communities and licensees. But mediation should not serve as a BLLC substitute for enforcement, especially regarding licensees documented and testified by BPD as a threat to public safety.

Whereas, by way of example, petitioners compare the BLLC’s mediation default to the response of other agencies to public safety violations noting that:

“When a Health Department inspector discovers improper food storage at a restaurant, or if a fire inspector notices that a business’s emergency exit is blocked, they do not require the closest community association to meet with the owner for mediation to talk about their frustration about the problem. Instead, they issue a violation notice and/or shut the business down. In contrast, when communities approach the Liquor Board to complain that a BD-7 tavern owner is allowing drug transactions to take place in his store or giving out plastic cups so that its patrons can drink in public on the front steps of the building, the BLLC repeatedly suggests mediation and MOUs and does nothing to address the problem.”

Whereas, the petition states, “Like the Health Department and the Fire Department, the BLLC also exists to promote public health.”.

Whereas, the Council shares this expectation, and joins with petitioners in calling upon the BLLC to use its authority and inspection services “for the protection, health, welfare, and safety of the people” as required by state law and the wellbeing of communities and liquor license establishments in Baltimore City.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, that the Council calls upon the Board of Liquor License Commissioners for Baltimore City (BLLC) to prepare for and participate in a requested public hearing on the crucial issues raised by a coalition of North and Northeast Baltimore City community associations, including the need for improved Police Department-BLLC interagency communications and joint enforcement efforts to terminate Baltimore City liquor license establishments violating the safety and wellbeing of the neighborhoods where they are located.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor; the Director and Commissioners of the Baltimore Liquor License Commission; the Police Commissioner; the Commander of the Northern Police District; the Presidents and Co-Presidents of the Waverly Improvement Association, Oakenshawe Improvement Association, Guilford Association, Abell Improvement Association, Charles Village Civic Association, Better Waverly Improvement Association, Winston-Govans Improvement Association, and Ednor Gardens/Lakeside Civic Association; the CEO and Director of Community Programs for Strong City Baltimore; Representatives of Baltimore Good Neighbors Coalition; the Senator and Delegates, 43rd

Legislative District; the City Solicitor; and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.