



Legislation Text

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

**DLR Draft II 09Apr20**

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**Introductory\***

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

Introduced by: President Scott

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning

**Emergency Response to COVID-19 - Immediate Housing For Persons Who Are Homeless**

For the purpose of calling on the Mayor, the Board of Estimates, and all affected City agencies to immediately make available sufficient hotel rooms and other non-congregate housing to provide homes for all interested persons currently residing in congregate spaces within homeless shelters and all other homeless persons in Baltimore City.

**Recitals**

On March 5, 2020, Governor Larry Hogan declared a state of emergency in the State of Maryland, and on March 19, 2020, Mayor Bernard C. “Jack” Young declared a state of emergency in Baltimore City. Both states of emergency related to the imminent public health emergency posed by COVID-19.

COVID-19 is a devastating disease that presents a significant risk of bodily harm and possible death to anyone who contracts the disease - particularly those most vulnerable members of society with pre-existing health conditions.

Individuals who are experiencing homelessness are often among the most medically vulnerable members of society and have a high rate of pre-existing health conditions.

Individuals who have contracted COVID-19 may not exhibit symptoms for a period of up to 14 days, and yet those individuals are often highly contagious during that 14-day period. Thus, screening individuals entering homeless shelters is not a fully effective means of identifying and isolating individuals who have contracted COVID-19 and who are contagious.

The National Association to End Homelessness has recommended as a best practice that all persons residing in congregate spaces in homeless shelters and other homeless people be moved into hotels or other non-congregate housing arrangements, and cities such have San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, and Austin have moved or plan to move all willing persons from congregate spaces in homeless shelters and other homeless persons to hotels and other non-congregate housing options.

Failing to provide immediate housing to persons in homeless shelters has a disparate impact on persons who are black because shelter residents are disproportionately persons who are black compared to the general population of Baltimore City.

The State of Maryland has issued an order for all residents to stay at home; everyone must have a home to be able to follow stay-at-home orders. Federal funds have been appropriated to Baltimore City through the CARES Act and FEMA that could be used by Baltimore City to provide such housing.

Baltimore City and the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services have begun screening and isolating in hotels approximately 150 persons who are either suspected of having contracted COVID-19 or who are vulnerable adults over the age of 62.

All City residents have a human right to health, safety, housing and racial equity. These rights are interconnected - and impact all residents. To fail to house the unhoused and provide for the health needs of all City residents puts each resident at greater risk of COVID-19.

**Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore,** That the Council calls on the Mayor, the Board of Estimates, and all affected City agencies to immediately make available sufficient hotel rooms and other non-congregate housing to provide homes for all interested persons currently residing in congregate spaces within homeless shelters and all other homeless persons in Baltimore City.

**And be it further resolved,** That the Council calls on the Mayor and Board of Estimates to appropriate sufficient funding to execute the above-referenced initiative as quickly as possible.

**And be it further resolved,** That, in order to access FEMA funding to pay for such housing, the Council calls on the Mayor and City Health Department to find that COVID-19 poses a serious threat to public health especially for those living in congregate homeless shelters and ordering that non-congregate housing be made available to those living in such congregate shelters.

**And be it further resolved,** That the Council calls on the Mayor to seek the assistance of the State of Maryland, nonprofit organizations, education institutions, businesses, and residents in order to achieve this initiative and meet the staffing needs for this move.

**And be it further resolved,** That the Council calls on the Mayor, the Board of Estimates, and all affected City agencies to formally acknowledge and move forward in adopting and implementing this initiative that will effectively empty City shelters to protect the health and safety of individuals who are homeless as well as public health and safety.

**And be it further resolved,** That the Council calls on the Mayor and Mayor's Office of Homeless Services to report to the Council on or before April 27, 2020, on whether it has adopted the policy changes called for by this resolution and any actions taken to implement these changes.

**And be it further resolved,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to Mayor, the Comptroller, the acting Director of the Department of Public Works, the acting City Solicitor, the Director of the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.