



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 Cohen

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning Informational Hearing - Responding to Mental Health Crises

For the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore City Health Department, the Baltimore City Fire Department, Mayor's Office of Human Services, Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc., the 911 Call Center, and advocates of mental health to investigate how behavioral and mental health crises are handled, identify gaps, and develop the best path forward for addressing and de-escalating crises.

Recitals

In light of recent events that have taken place across the U.S. and Baltimore, we must reexamine our response to behavioral and mental health crises. We seek to decriminalize mental health challenges. Too often, we have asked police officers to solve issues that they are ill equipped to handle. Police are not clinicians. Mental health issues like schizophrenia and addiction require a mental health response led by mental health professionals. Law enforcement has a role to play in responding to crises and supporting other professionals but sending police alone can escalate tense situations and result in bad outcomes for everyone. We also know that because of implicit bias and our legacy of racism, black and brown people experiencing mental health crises are most at risk for negative interactions with law enforcement.

In Baltimore, there is a lack of clarity regarding how the 911 system handles mental and behavioral health calls. Through this hearing we seek to illuminate how the various agencies and nonprofits work together to reduce harm and provide support. Individuals experiencing a mental health crisis should receive treatment from healthcare professionals and clinicians. They should also receive aftercare and proper follow up.

As we experience both a local and national uprising, we must rethink every facet of public safety by better incorporating mental health professionals and existing relationships within our communities. We must also make sure our systems clearly communicate with each other.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the City Council invites representatives from the Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore City Health Department, the Baltimore City Fire Department, Mayor's Office of Human Services, Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc., the 911 Call Center, and advocates of mental health to investigate how behavioral and mental health crises are handled, identify gaps, and develop the best path forward for addressing and de-escalating crises.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Police Commissioner, the Health Commissioner, the Fire Chief, the Director of the Mayor's Office of Human Services, the President and CEO of Behavioral Health System Baltimore, the Executive Director of Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc., and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.