



Legislation Text

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Introductory*

City of Baltimore Council Bill R (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Burnett

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning

Investigative Hearing - Well-being of the Transgender Community in Baltimore

For the purpose of inviting representatives from the Mayor's Office, the Health Department, the Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore City Public Schools, the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services, the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, the Baltimore City Office of Equity and Civil Rights, the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office, the Baltimore City Department of Social Services, the Maryland Department of Health, Behavioral Health System Baltimore, and other relevant stakeholders to update the Council on services provided to and the general well-being of the transgender community in Baltimore City.

Recitals

Anti-transgender stigma, transphobia, and the dehumanization of transgender individuals is prevalent in the media, politics and public policy. According to the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's (HRCF) 2018 report *Dismantling a Culture of Violence: Understanding Anti-Transgender Violence and Ending the Crisis*, transgender and gender-expansive people face stigma surrounding who they are from an early age. Often rooted in inaccurate beliefs and politically-motivated attacks on transgender identities, this stigma erects barriers in virtually every facet of life, denying transgender people the equal opportunity to succeed and be accepted for who they are. In a Baltimore-based Be the Conversation (BTC) study, transgender and non-binary Baltimoreans view stigma and transphobia as a leading contributor to their violence experiences. This stigma and lack of general knowledge and acceptance has a profound impact on the health, well-being, and safety of transgender individuals.

According to the HRCF, in May, there were 17 anti-LGBTQ laws enacted in the United States, making 2021 the worst year for anti-LGBTQ laws in recent history. Removing existing civil rights protections increases the possibility of attack and greater discrimination towards transgender individuals. Existing discrimination is found in unequal barriers to education, economic development, housing, health care, and the justice system..

In a report by GLSEN, the nation's leading education non-profit addressing LGBTQ issues in K-12 schools, over half of transgender students (54%) have been denied access to restrooms that are consistent with their gender and nearly half of transgender students (48%) have been prevented from using their chosen name. In addition, the HRCF report indicates that 84% of transgender youth do not feel safe in the classroom.

Extensive barriers to health care exist for the transgender community. Finding medical professionals that respect and affirm their identities as well as insurance that covers medically necessary procedures are on-going challenges. Transgender individuals report being denied care simply because of their gender identity. In the Leading Innovation for Transgender Women's Health and Empowerment (LITE) study, individuals cited safety in transit as a barrier to accessing healthcare. Transphobia also leads to adverse mental health, including suicidality and PTSD. Other barriers faced include unstable housing, increased rates of homelessness and employment discrimination.

Transgender individuals suffer from an increased rate of violence. In the Supporting Transgender Research and Opportunities in the Baltimore Environment (STROBE) study, 75% of participants had experience physical violence in their lifetime and HRCF found that there was a 43% increase in anti-LGBTQ hate groups in 2019. Violence is highly prevalent for local transgender women of color, especially violence perpetrated by strangers and intimate partner violence. Specifically, in Baltimore, police violence and harassment are among the concerns that face the transgender community.

Black transgender women in Baltimore suffer from the added impacts of racism and sexism, compounding the discrimination they face. Given the added obstacles they face, Black transgender women are especially vulnerable, with many dealing with poverty, homelessness, intimate partner violence, sexual assault, survival sex work, addiction, HIV and other STIs, and general violence. There is an epidemic of violence against Black transgender women, with at least 10 Black transgender women having been killed in Baltimore City since 2012.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the Council invites representatives from the Mayor's Office, the Health Department, the Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore City Public Schools, the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services, the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, the Baltimore City Office of Equity and Civil Rights, the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office, the Baltimore City Department of Social Services, the Maryland Department of Health, Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore, and other relevant stakeholders to update the Council on services provided to and the general well-being of the transgender community in Baltimore.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to *the Mayor, the Baltimore City Health Commissioner, the Baltimore Police Commissioner, the CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools, the Director of the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services, the Director of the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, the Director of the Baltimore City Office of Equity and Civil Rights, the Baltimore City State's Attorney, the Director of the Baltimore City Department of Social Services, the Acting Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health, the President and CEO of Behavioral Health System Baltimore, the Mayor's LGBTQ Affairs Liaison, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.*