



Legislation Text

File #: 23-0155R, Version: 0

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Introductory*

City of Baltimore Council Bill R (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmembers Cohen and Schleifer

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning

Request for City Action - Increase the Salary Range for Sanitation Workers

For the purpose of expressing support for the essential workers of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 67 and Local 44 in their negotiation of a new contract for sanitation workers and calling on the Mayor and Department of Public Works to improve working conditions for sanitation workers, raise their pay, and match or surpass the starting salary of local private contractors.

Recitals

In the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic, through stay-at-home orders and during the highest rates of hospitalization, solid waste workers were still working in person. They showed up for Baltimore, continuing to deliver essential City services and maintaining quality of life for City residents. Now, we must show up for them.

In 2020, Councilmembers Cohen and Schleifer coordinated with the Department of Public Works and union representatives to increase the starting salary for a temporary sanitation worker from \$11 to \$16 an hour and to increase the starting salary for a full-time sanitation worker from \$15 to \$20 an hour.

Despite these efforts, there continued to be a sustained high rate of vacancy in these positions, demonstrating that the new entry rates are not enough to retain staff long-term.

In its January 2022 report on route optimization in Baltimore City, Rubicon Technologies called for an additional 48 Commercial Drivers License (CDL) drivers (an increase of 72% from current staffing levels) and an additional 96 sanitation workers to be added to Baltimore City's workforce.

CDL drivers are crucial to the waste collection process; however, City CDL driver salaries are not competitive with the private sector. A current Baltimore City job posting for a Department of Public Works CDL Driver II has a minimum starting salary of \$44,760, which corresponds to approximately \$22.56 per hour. There are currently private sector job postings in the Baltimore area for \$24.50 per hour for non-CDL drivers and \$30 per hour for CDL drivers. Pay for CDL drivers must be competitive, and the City must do more to communicate the benefits of public-sector employment to job seekers.

Baltimore City has created strong incentives to recruit more police officers, including a \$5,000 signing bonus, a \$6,000 grant towards student loans, and a housing allowance for relocation of up to \$12,000. Similar incentives are needed to entice CDL drivers and sanitation workers to join our City force.

Baltimore City is required by City Code Article 23 § 1-4 {“Public works to provide sanitation services”} to provide weekly recycling pickup and its ability to do so is hampered by the City’s sustained high vacancy rate among sanitation workers. Sanitation workers continue to have opportunities for higher earnings with employment by private sector waste disposal contractors, and existing infrastructure and processes within the control of the Department of Public Works limit Baltimore City’s ability to retain sanitation workers.

Baltimore City solid waste collection should continue to be performed by public sector, union workers. The current memorandum of understanding between AFSCME Council 67 and Local 44 and the City of Baltimore ends after fiscal year 2023. Baltimore City needs to retain its current workers and attract 48 additional CDL drivers and 96 additional laborers in order to deliver high quality sanitation services to citizens and to resume weekly recycling collection.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the City Council expresses its support for the workers of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 67 and Local 44 in their negotiation of a new contract for sanitation workers and calls on the Mayor and Department of Public Works to improve working conditions for sanitation workers, raise their pay, and match or surpass the starting salary of local private contractors.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Director of the Department of Public Works, the Labor Commissioner, the Director of the Department of Human Resources, Glenard S. Middleton, Sr., the AFSCME Executive Director of Maryland Council 67 and President of Maryland Public Employees, Local 44, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.