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Better Schools. Safer Streets. Stronger Neighborhoods.

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CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT SIGNIFICANTLY AMENDS ENTERTAINMENT LEGISLATION DUE TO FISCAL CONCERNS

Bill provides for "targeted expansion" of live entertainment to zoned business districts

BALTIMORE—Today, Baltimore City Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake announced plans to significantly amend City Council Bill 08-0163 “Live Entertainment” citing her concerns about the cost of the proposed legislation during the current economic crisis. The amended legislation will allow for a targeted expansion of live entertainment that will protect neighborhoods and will be cost neutral to the city and existing businesses.

“While I am deeply committed to expanding responsible entertainment options for Baltimore City residents and visitors, the initial legislation may have a negative fiscal impact on the City’s budget at a time when we are cutting important city services,” Rawlings-Blake said. “During these tough times, we must make difficult choices and focus limited resources on our core priorities: public safety, public schools and youth services.”

The original legislation, modeled after a similar concept adopted in San Francisco was introduced in July 2008, a time when Baltimore City’s fiscal condition was more stable. The newly amended bill would allow Restaurants and Taverns in zoned B-1, B-2 business districts to obtain a live entertainment privilege through the city zoning board and state liquor board. “By significantly amending the bill, we can have a targeted expansion of responsible live entertainment and protect our city’s neighborhoods without any negative impact on existing businesses.”

Rawlings-Blake thanked the many supporters of the legislation for their invaluable assistance and collaboration. “I would like to thank all the communities who worked with me to craft this legislation,” Rawlings-Blake said. “With an unprecedented level of transparency and openness, including an initial taskforce, several public hearings and community work sessions, we have improved this legislation by working together. This proves that the legislative process works, that concerns are not only heard but addressed.”

Rawlings-Blake said the newly amended Bill will also help jumpstart the City’s fledgling comprehensive rezoning process, TRANSFORM Baltimore. “I look forward to working again to enhance arts and live entertainment options as part of the zoning code rewrite. This targeted bill will also help us have a more informed discussion about the rezoning effort,” Rawlings-Blake said. Rawlings-Blake released an outline of the newly amended legislation.

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Targeted Expansion with Neighborhood Safeguards:

- Allows Live Entertainment as a Conditional Use for Restaurants in B1 and B2 zones and for taverns in B2 zones.
- Adds a provision in Title 14 that a list of Conditional Use applications must be maintained and arranged by Council District and submitted monthly to the Council that includes:
 - The property's address and zoning district
 - The applicant's name and contact information.
 - The proposed use of the property
 - The Date the application was filed; AND
 - The Date the application was heard before the Board.
- Currently, the Board when considering an application for Live Entertainment as a Conditional Use must consider:
 - Days and hours of operation;
 - Use of amplification, noise levels, and need for noise proofing;
 - Limits on the size of the establishment or on the size, location, or configuration of the entertainment or dancing venue within the establishment;
 - Number of live entertainers;
 - Number of seats proposed for outdoor table service;
 - Exterior lighting;
 - Whether to limit the accessory use to live entertainment only or dancing only;
 - The establishment and maintenance of:
 - Traffic and parking management plan
 - Indoor and outdoor security plan
- This Bill will be adding the following provisions that the Board must consider to that list:
 - Proximity of residences, schools, religious institutions, or parks to the establishment
 - Maximum authorized occupant load of the establishment.
 - Volume of vehicular and pedestrian traffic in the area.
 - The maintenance of a sanitation plan.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.BaltimoreCityCouncil.com>

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