



STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE

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Better Schools. Safer Streets. Stronger Neighborhoods.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT TO TOUR CITY SMALL BUSINESSES SUPPORTING LIVE ENTERTAINMENT BILL

3-Stop Tour Focuses on Baltimore's Vital Tourism and Hospitality Economy

BALTIMORE—Tomorrow, Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake will make a 3-stop tour of restaurants that support legislation recently passed by the City Council to enable a targeted expansion of responsible live entertainment for restaurants and taverns in neighborhood business districts. The tour will focus on the economic benefits of the legislation on small businesses as Mayor Sheila Dixon considers signing the bill into law.

The Baltimore Sun endorsed the live entertainment bill and urged Mayor Dixon to sign it calling it “an important step” that “will burnish Baltimore's image as a cultural and entertainment destination, provide employment to musicians and other performers and give a much-needed boost to small business owners struggling to weather the recession.” The Maryland Restaurant Association agrees saying the bill will help “bring excitement back into the City and into our businesses, which will improve the local economy and help provide jobs.”

“Baltimore has the raw artistic talent to support a thriving live arts scene, but too often, antiquated zoning rules get in the way,” Rawlings-Blake said. “To continue with the status quo is simply not an option. This legislation will bring necessary change and will help Baltimore's hospitality economy. It is my hope that this tour of local small businesses will underscore the need to put this new law on the books.”

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT SMALL BUSINESS TOUR:

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

4:30pm—Clementine, located in Hamilton at 5402 Harford Road, is a neighborhood restaurant in a B2 business district. Owners Cristin Dadant and Winston Blick are interested in offering live entertainment to their customers, but cannot because of outdated zoning rules.

5:15pm—Back Alley Jazz Restaurant (Proposed), at 1131 West Baltimore Street. Owner Eric Segman wants to breathe new life into the Baltimore's Hollins Market neighborhood by creating a “Blues Alley” restaurant concept. Under the current zoning rules, however, this restaurant would not be able to offer live jazz.

6:15pm—Pazo, located near Harbor East at 1425 Aliceanna Street is one of Baltimore's hottest restaurants. Owner Tony Forman wants to have after-dinner dancing with a DJ but is currently prohibited by the City's zoning code.

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ABOUT THE BILL: Targeted Expansion with Neighborhood Safeguards.

At different times since at least 1980, the City Council has tried to enact measures to increase live entertainment venues to support Baltimore's arts community and enrich city nightlife. Those efforts failed. Last month, after more than a year of community dialogue, the City Council approved a bill that allows 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. The new law demands that certain conditions be considered before granting zoning approval, including traffic, sanitation, security, noise mitigation and other community concerns. The Baltimore Sun said the bill "contains important safeguards that should hearten residents in places like Federal Hill, Hampden and Southeast Baltimore."

The bill was introduced in July 2008 and moved through the legislative process with unprecedented levels of public involvement and transparency including several public hearings and work sessions throughout the City. Hundreds of citizens participated. The legislation was significantly amended to address public input. In addition, the entertainment bill was approved in conjunction with two bills that provide additional community safeguards. One authorizes the City Health Department to suspend or deny the renewal of a license for a food service facility that has received multiple environmental or civil citations. The other bill allows the zoning board to suspend or revoke a conditional use for failure to comply with the conditions imposed by the board.

For more information visit:

http://www.baltimorecitycouncil.com/LiveEntertainment_Licenses.html

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