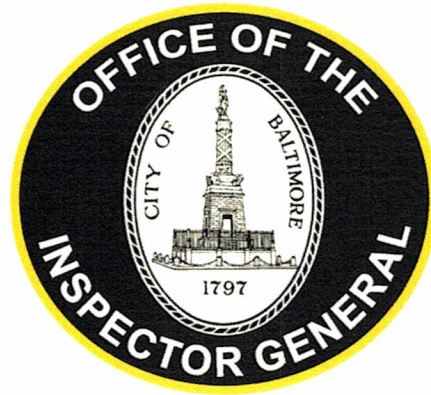


# OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL CITY OF BALTIMORE



**Isabel Mercedes Cumming**  
**Inspector General**

## **Investigative Report Synopsis**

**OIG Case # 2017-0799**

**Issued: October 30, 2018**



October 30, 2018

Dear Citizens of Baltimore City,

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) received complaints that members of the Executive Leadership Team of the Department of Human Resources (DHR) were harassing and humiliating subordinates. During the course of its investigation, the OIG identified additional operational issues at DHR involving the time and resources DHR spent on WorkBaltimore and DHR's Smokey Crush and Leaf smoking cessation program.

An Interim Report was issued to management on July 17, 2018. Shortly thereafter, DHR's Director tendered her resignation from City service. The OIG issued a Final Report on September 21, 2018. What follows is the public synopsis of the OIG's Reports.

The mission of the OIG is to promote accountability, efficiency, and integrity in City government, as well as the investigation of complaints of fraud, financial waste, and abuse in City government. For this investigation, the OIG interviewed more than forty witnesses, including current and past DHR employees, and other individuals in City government.

### *Harassment Claims*

Based on interviews of staff and examinations of records, the investigation determined the actions of the Executive Leadership Team were damaging morale and causing employees to feel marginalized. Witnesses provided numerous examples of instances when the Department Officials were heard ridiculing and demeaning DHR employees, other City employees, and members of the public. Witnesses reported that this behavior deterred them from presenting new ideas or suggesting modifications to existing DHR initiatives out of fear for potential repercussions if the ideas were not well received.

The OIG determined that DHR has experienced an increase in turnover in recent years. Employees reported that the turnover increase, coupled with Leadership's hostile interactions toward them, created a culture of fear in which employees were afraid of being terminated or retaliated against. Many DHR employees reported that they were afraid of what would happen if the Leadership Team found out they had been interviewed by the OIG. Even assurances of anonymity by the OIG were insufficient to alleviate most witnesses' anxiety of speaking candidly about DHR operations, as the department's Leadership previously attempted to identify the person who submitted an anonymous complaint regarding the DHR environment.

Many DHR employees reported that the Leadership's behavior led to decreased productivity. Because DHR supports the human resources needs for every City agency, these behaviors potentially impacted citywide operations.

### *WorkBaltimore*

Numerous past and current DHR employees were critical of the amount of time and money required to plan and execute WorkBaltimore in 2017. Several employees reported that, throughout 2017, they spent ten or more hours each week preparing for WorkBaltimore, leaving them with inadequate time to complete their basic job functions. A few DHR employees were taken away from their normal job responsibilities entirely and charged with working solely on WorkBaltimore. DHR's Leadership authorized employees to work overtime and compensatory time in order to try to complete all of their responsibilities.

Additionally, the OIG determined that DHR spent more than \$425,000 on the one-day job fair. DHR utilized multiple sources of funding to finance the event, including funds raised from private donations and sponsorships, money from DHR's General Fund accounts, and a \$100,000 Innovation Fund loan that was supposed to be repaid to the City within one year. To date, DHR has not repaid any of the Innovation Fund money to the City.

The OIG investigation found that there was insufficient data available after the event to determine whether the results justified the expenses associated with WorkBaltimore. Given the limited post-event data available, the OIG was unable to quantify how successful the event was at securing employment for City residents.

### *Smokey Crush & Leaf*

In 2015, DHR unveiled a smoking cessation initiative targeting City employees, which featured performers costumed as a crushed cigarette butt named "Smokey Crush" and a tobacco leaf named "Leaf." Several employees criticized this initiative as ineffective. Witnesses reported that City employees complained to DHR staff that the Smokey Crush and Leaf characters were "childish" and "insulting" to an adult audience. Moreover, the initiative was criticized for failing to offer substantive services for those trying to quit smoking; instead, performers simply provided City employees with a brochure containing smoking cessation tips.

Employees also expressed concerns about the expense associated with Smokey Crush and Leaf. The OIG investigation determined that, within the first six months of conceptualizing the initiative, DHR spent more than \$26,000 on the program. Since then, DHR has spent thousands of dollars each year on the initiative, most of which is spent to compensate the performers who portray the Smokey Crush and Leaf characters. Each performer earns \$100 for a one to two-hour appearance, plus expenses.

The OIG learned that the daughter of a member of the DHR Leadership Team was hired, along with two of the daughter's friends, to serve as Smokey Crush and Leaf performers. The DHR employee failed to disclose her daughter's contractual employment with DHR in her financial disclosure forms filed with the City's Ethics Board. Given the DHR employee's position and her

involvement in the initiative, the OIG determined that the decision to hire her daughter created the appearance of nepotism and thus a conflict of interest.

The OIG referred the operational issues to management. In a subsequent response, the Mayor concurred with the OIG's findings and referred the matter to the Acting Director of DHR for further action.

Sincerely,



Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General  
Office of the Inspector General

Cc: Hon. Catherine E. Pugh, Mayor of Baltimore City  
Hon. Bernard C. Young, President, City Council  
Hon. Joan M. Pratt, Baltimore City Comptroller  
Honorable Members of the Baltimore City Council  
Hon. Andre M. Davis, City Solicitor