

Group wants hotel to hire primarily city residents

July 21, 2005

An employment advocate for low-income Baltimoreans wants a promise that city dwellers will get most of the jobs at a planned convention center hotel and that those workers will get opportunities to better themselves.

The Job Opportunities Task Force sent a letter this week to the Baltimore Development Corp., the city's economic development agency, suggesting that Baltimore's contract with Hilton include provisions that would benefit local job-seekers.

The City Council is considering the BDC's plan to use \$305 million in city revenue bonds to build a 752-room Hilton next to the downtown convention center.

Jason Perkins-Cohen, JOTF's executive director, said he sees a chance in the debate over the publicly financed project to further his organization's mission of helping people get work.

"The hotel is certainly something we are watching," Perkins-Cohen said. "We saw it as an opportunity for us to voice our opinion on a very public deal."

In addition to asking for a requirement that 85 percent of the hotel workers be city residents, JOTF also wants the city to commit to workplace adult education programs, worker training for career advancement and on-site child care.

BDC officials have said they will consider incorporating such initiatives into the hotel deal.

- Jill Rosen

Copyright © 2005, The Baltimore Sun