



Allegheny County Council

County of Allegheny
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Legislation Text

File #: 11548-20, **Version:** 1

Motion of the Council of Allegheny County urging the Port Authority of Allegheny County to immediately implement a low-income fare option to meet the current crisis, and to evaluate the possibility of long-term funding sources for such a program.

WHEREAS, we are in unprecedented times in which unemployment claims in Allegheny County have risen nearly 800% since the Port Authority of Allegheny County made the decision to suspend fares in March of 2020, due to the deleterious effects of the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, effective June 8th, Port Authority made the decision to reinstate full fares, despite the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, even as unemployment claims have surged, and applications for public support programs like CHIP and SNAP are equally high; and

WHEREAS, while Pennsylvania's overall incidence of new COVID-19 cases remains low when compared to other states, it is the judgment of Council that this in and of itself should not be a cause to believe that the pandemic's deleterious effects are fully abated; indeed, the Allegheny County Health Department conducted a briefing on June 22 "to provide information on recent cases and steps the community needs to take to ensure that numbers do not continue to increase at [the current] rate," and many employers throughout Allegheny County are operating at only a fraction of their usual capacity even after the Commonwealth's stay at home order expired and with relaxed social distancing and other guidelines in force; and

WHEREAS, it is the judgment of Council that reinstating full fares will function to make it more difficult for individuals - particularly those who may earn hourly wages and/or be dependent upon tips for large portions of their income, and who are already struggling with paying their bills and providing basic necessities - to reach their places of employment; and

WHEREAS, it is further the judgment of Council that transit dependency is highly correlated to lower incomes, and transit-dependent lower income essential workers and riders have no option but to take transit during a global pandemic; and,

WHEREAS, studies have shown that low income households in Allegheny County are overly cost-burdened with transit, more so than in other similarly-sized metropolitan areas; and,

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth's Department of Human Services currently provides a debit card to each EBT benefit family based upon qualification information provided to the Department; these cards thus prove that those who bear them earn wages at or below 130% of the federal poverty level without the need for the Port Authority to administer an extensive qualification or identification process for a low-income fare program; and

WHEREAS, it is the judgment of Council that Port Authority should implement a low-income fares program whereby the EBT benefits card can be shown in place of fare payment during this crisis; and

WHEREAS, it is anticipated that the Pittsburgh City Council will be considering a legislative item similar in tone to this Motion during the week of June 22;

The Council of the County of Allegheny therefore hereby moves as follows:

The Port Authority of Allegheny County is hereby urged to immediately implement a low-income fare option to meet the current crisis, and to evaluate the possibility of long-term funding sources for such a program.

It is further moved that:

A copy of this Motion shall be sent to the Port Authority CEO, Port Authority of Allegheny County board, Allegheny County Executive, and the Pittsburgh City Council.