



Allegheny County Council

County of Allegheny
436 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Phone (412) 350-6490
Fax (412) 350-6499

Legislation Text

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Motion of the Council of Allegheny County authorizing the establishment of a program geared towards providing internships for individuals aged 50 and over within the Office of County Council.

WHEREAS, according to the non-partisan US Government Accountability Office (GAO) in a 2013 analysis survey of Consumer Finances (SCF) data it stated that around 41% of Americans 55 years or older have no retirement savings whatsoever and only 52% have retirement savings in a defined contribution plan or Individual Retirement Account (IRA); and

WHEREAS, further according to this same GAO report 27 percent of all households age 55-64 have neither retirement savings nor a pension. Their median net worth is about \$9,000.00 and 91 percent in this group have less than \$25,000 in financial assets; and

WHEREAS, based upon this GAO report it appears that those who are 50 years old and older need further employment in order to fund their retirements; and

WHEREAS, the worker participation rate in America is close to 38-year low as there are 94 million people not currently working; and

WHEREAS, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) the incidence of long-term unemployment increases with age. In 2014, for example, 22.1 percent of the unemployed under age 25 had looked for work for 27 weeks or longer, compared with 44.6 percent of those 55 years and older; and

WHEREAS, further the BLS found that as the duration of unemployment increases, the likelihood of becoming employed in the following month declines. In 2014, about 35 percent of people who had been out of work less than 5 weeks found work in the next month; about 11 percent of people who had been out of work for 1 year or longer became employed in the following month; and

WHEREAS, according to a New York Times article, "The Human Disaster of Unemployment," (May 12, 2012, Dean Baker and Kevin Hassett):

- Someone between age 50 and 61 who has been unemployed for 17 months has about a 9 percent chance of finding a new job in the next three months; someone 62 or older in the same position has only about a 6 percent chance.
- There's an estimated 50 to 100 percent increase in death rates for older male workers in the years immediately following a job loss, partly due to suicides; and

WHEREAS, AARP did a study in 2015 that found on average, 45 percent of older jobseekers (ages 55 and older) were long-term unemployed (out of work for 27 weeks or more) in 2014: and

WHEREAS, however those in this age bracket have wonderful qualities that they can bring to their potential employer; and

WHEREAS, in the New York Times article *The Age Premium: Retaining Older Workers* (May 14, 2014), Marcie Pitts-Catsouphe, director of the Sloan Center, said that after the deep recession, many employers were beginning to assess longer-term hiring needs: “When we talk to employers, what they say is they recognize the competencies and skills that older workers bring, particularly those that are very client-facing, because that social capital means a lot in terms of maintaining business.,” and

WHEREAS, some private employers such as Goldman Sachs, Credit Suisse, and Morgan Stanley have created programs called Returnship programs that are specifically designed for those who have left the workforce for two or more years and are ready to return and are looking to restart their careers after an extended absence from the workforce; and

WHEREAS, numerous agencies within Allegheny County, including the County Department of Human Services, AARP, Jewish Family and Children’s Services, CareerLink Pittsburgh, the Goodwill Employment Training Center, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh have programs specifically geared towards assisting individuals in this age bracket to enter or re-enter the job market; and

WHEREAS, it is accordingly the judgment of Council that individuals that are 50 years or older have a demonstrable record of loyalty to their respective employers, together with extensive workplace knowledge derived from experience, and therefore constitute a valuable resource that employers would be wise to consider when making hiring decisions; and

WHEREAS, considering the statistics cited regarding the low retirement savings of many of those in this age bracket Council believes it is highly desirous and good public policy to get those in that age group off the unemployment rolls and into the workforce so they have a higher amount of retirement savings; and

WHEREAS, it is further the judgment of Council that the establishment of a program geared towards providing internships for individuals aged 50 and over within the Office of County Council would be beneficial both to the Council and to the individuals participating in the program, as this Council can harness the exceptional qualities that these individuals possess while at the same providing the necessary work experience to bring these individuals back into the workforce who have potentially been unemployed for a long period of time; and

WHEREAS, it further the judgement of this Council that the government of Allegheny County along with private employers located within Allegheny County be encouraged to create likewise programs including working with the Allegheny Conference to not only implement such programs especially for the benefit of long term residents who have paid taxes for many years to Allegheny County, but those same long term residents who are 50 years or older for more permanent positions; and

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS MOVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY,

The Council is hereby authorized to employ for not more than ninety (90) consecutive days each year a maximum of two (2) interns aged fifty (50) years or older to serve in Office of County Council with consideration for those who have been out of the workforce for more than two (2) years and long term Allegheny County residents. To be eligible to serve in this program an individual shall certify to the Executive Committee that he or she has attained the age of fifty-five (50) years, is a bona fide resident of Allegheny County, and is a citizen of the United States.

IT IS FURTHER MOVED that compensation and payment under this resolution shall be made according to hourly payment rates established by the Council's Executive Committee each year.

IT IS FURTHER MOVED that the Executive Committee is hereby authorized to prescribe such rules and regulations as it determines necessary to carry out the intent of this Motion.