



Allegheny County Council

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

Legislation Text

File #: 12564-23, **Version:** 1

Motion of the Council of Allegheny County censuring Council Member Bethany Hallam for conduct detrimental to County Council, specifically her actions during the January 5, 2023 meeting of the Allegheny County Jail Oversight Board.

WHEREAS, the Allegheny County Jail Oversight Board (hereinafter the “ACJOB”) conducted a meeting on January 5, 2023, at which Common Pleas Court Judge Elliot Howsie presided, with Board members, staff, and the public in attendance; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to designation by the Council President, Allegheny County Council Member Bethany Hallam currently serves as a member of the ACJOB; and

WHEREAS, the January 5, 2023 meeting of the ACJOB was livestreamed and is archived at [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=orpf6KL2kJU), specifically at <https://youtu.be/orpf6KL2kJU>; and

WHEREAS, approximately two hours and 35 minutes into the meeting video, Ms. Hallam can be seen and heard engaging in a conversation with Judge Howsie regarding Allegheny County Jail Warden Orlando Harper’s response to a question previously posed by Ms. Hallam; and

WHEREAS, at the conclusion of that conversation, Judge Howsie opted to move on to other matters, and Ms. Hallam can clearly be heard referring to him as a “p**ck”; and

WHEREAS, this utterance was heard by Judge Howsie, and he and Ms. Hallam engaged in a brief conversation about it on the record and during the course of the ACJOB meeting; and

WHEREAS, as defined by Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary, the term used by Ms. Hallam in this context is characterized as a “vulgar” reference, either to male genitalia or to “a spiteful or contemptible man often having some authority”; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Article 1013 of the Administrative Code of Allegheny County, the “Political Activity; Accountability, Conduct and Ethics Code” (hereinafter the “ACE Code”) Ms. Hallam meets the definition of a “covered person,” as she is an elected County official; and

WHEREAS, as expressly established by the terms of §5-1013.09 of the ACE Code, all covered persons must set and follow an example of proper conduct that requires them to “[d]edicate themselves to the highest ideals of honor and integrity in all public relationships in order to merit the respect and confidence of covered persons, and the public” and “[s]erve the best interests of the public at all times with the recognition that this is the chief function of government....”; and

WHEREAS, it is the determination of Council that Ms. Hallam’s utterance (as described above) falls far short of the ethical standard established by the ACE Code and, given its vulgar and derogatory nature, reflects poorly upon the Council President (who designated Ms. Hallam to be Council’s representative on the

ACJOB) and Council as a whole;

WHEREAS, it is further the determination of Council that Ms. Hallam's utterance, because it was directed at a seated Judge presiding over criminal cases currently pending in the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County, is particularly egregious, insofar as it also functions to undermine both the authority and dignity of that Court and Judge Howsie specifically;

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

That Council Member Bethany Hallam is hereby censured by Allegheny County Council for her public behavior at the January 5, 2023 meeting of the Allegheny County Jail Oversight Board, and is directed to:

- A. Issue an apology to Judge Howsie on the record no later than the January 24, 2023 regular meeting of Council; and
- B. Refrain from any such public behavior at all times in the future.