

Legislation Text

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Calling on the Committee on Labor and Civil Service of the Council of the City of Philadelphia to hold hearings on increasing access to City services to immigrant and language-minority populations, including the development of hiring guidelines and goals, and to determine progress made toward that end.

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia is a diverse City with immigrants from many parts of the world, who work, own homes, open businesses and contribute to the economic, social, and cultural well-being of our neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, Growth in Philadelphia's population and small businesses over recent decades has been significantly driven by immigrants, with an increasing number of Philadelphians being foreign born; the United States' Census Bureau has recently estimated that 176,373 residents, or 12% of the City's population, are immigrants; and

WHEREAS, Latinos are the largest and one of the fastest growing minority communities in the United States, having grown to 53 million in 2012 and representing 17% of our nation's population, and as of the 2010 Census nearly 200,000 Latinos make up 12.3% of the population of the City of Philadelphia; additionally, Asians make up 6.3% of the City's population; and

WHEREAS, More than one in five Philadelphians speak a language other than English at home according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, including 53,763 Spanish-speakers who speak English less than "very well"; additional predominant languages spoken by persons in Philadelphia who speak English less than "very well" are Chinese (all dialects - 15,984 persons), Vietnamese (9,959 persons), and Russian (7,824 persons), and there are concentrations of Philadelphians who primarily speak Arabic, African languages, and others; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Michael Nutter has recognized the importance of serving the needs of the immigrant and Limited English Proficient (LEP) communities in the City of Philadelphia through several Executive Orders, beginning with Executive Order No. 9-08 which mandated that all City departments, agencies, boards, and commissions expand language access services for Limited English Proficient residents and visitors, and requiring the development of plans to increase the number of bi/multilingual personnel; and

WHEREAS, Executive Order No. 8-09 further ordered that all City services be provided regardless of the person's citizenship or legal immigration status, including but not limited to such critical functions as Police and Fire services, with some exceptions; emergency and non-emergency medical services; mental health services; children's protective services; and access to facilities such as City libraries and recreation centers; and

WHEREAS, In 2013 Mayor Nutter established through Executive Order No. 3-13 the Office of Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs which is tasked with providing guidance to City departments, agencies, boards, and commissions on how to better serve immigrant and minority populations, as well as to ensure compliance with Executive Orders 9-08 and 8-09; and

WHEREAS, Over the course of these Executive Orders the Mayor has stressed the importance of promoting and facilitating the utilization of City services by all residents and visitors who are entitled to and in need of them, and of ensuring public trust and confidence in City government; and

WHEREAS, to meet these ends it is critical that achievable goals are established and met, including the development of hiring guidelines and goals for bi/multilingual personnel and a municipal workforce that reflects the changing composition of the City; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Committee on Labor and Civil Service of the Council of the City of Philadelphia will hold hearings on increasing access to City services to immigrant and language-minority populations, including the development of hiring guidelines and goals, and to determine progress made toward that end.