



City of Philadelphia

City Council
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Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Labor and Civil Service to hold hearings on the effectiveness of implicit bias and racial equity trainings for employees of the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, The expulsion, arrest, and detainment of two Black men awaiting a friend at a Starbucks located in Philadelphia on April 12, 2018, has sparked national outrage at the treatment of people of color by both local businesses and persons employed by the City of Philadelphia. Mayor Jim Kenney responded by stating that the incident “appears to exemplify what racial discrimination looks like in 2018”; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations is responding to the incident by examining Starbucks’ policies and procedures, including the extent of, or need for, implicit bias training for its employees. Starbucks has also announced that it will facilitate unconscious bias training for all American Starbucks employees on May 29th of this year; and

WHEREAS, Unconscious bias exists within all individuals, and informs how we perceive and interact with others. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, biases can be based on skin color, gender, gender identity, age, height, weight, introversion versus extroversion, marital and parental status, disability status, and where someone went to college, among other categories. Additionally, biases cause individuals to make decisions in favor of one group to the detriment of others; and

WHEREAS, A study by Stanford University emphasizes the role of unconscious bias in the workplace. Stereotypes cause discrimination by influencing how individuals process and recall information about other people. As people process and store information, established stereotypes psychologically “distort” what a person perceives. Once a person develops stereotyped memories, they form mental frameworks of human behavior that are consistent with their established stereotypes. Biases can also result from conditional learning. A person who has had a bad experience with someone they categorize as belonging to a particular group, often associates that entire group with that bad experience; and

WHEREAS, Empirical studies demonstrate how unconscious bias affects others. A Yale University study found that male and female scientists were more likely to hire men and pay men \$4,000 more per year than women. In a Georgia Institute of Technology study of resumes with “typically White” and “typically Black” names, applicants with white names with the former received 50% more callbacks than applicants with Black names; and

WHEREAS, The Office of Diversity & Inclusion led by Nolan Atkinson has committed to designing a racial equity plan to shape programs and policies in the City of Philadelphia which have had an inequitable effect on communities of color. To date, the Office has deployed three initiatives and trained 200 people towards efforts to adjust existing programs and policies; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, the Department of Justice announced a new department-wide implicit bias program that will train prosecutors and law enforcement agents to recognize and address their own implicit bias; and

WHEREAS, Various government and law enforcement bodies across the country have implemented anti-bias training curriculums for their employees, including in New York City and Salt Lake City. Recently, the Philadelphia Police Department established a plan for bias and equity training under the MacArthur grant; and

WHEREAS, Researchers are just beginning to understand the effectiveness of implicit bias and racial equity trainings. Historically, prejudice, bias, and other psychological processes are complex in nature and difficult to measure; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby authorize the Committee on Labor and Civil Service to hold hearings on the effectiveness of implicit bias and racial equity trainings for employees of the City of Philadelphia and examining best practices around the development and implementation of such trainings.