

Requiring Advanced Diversity, Equity And Inclusion Training For All Ulster County Elected Officials

Referred to: The Ways and Means Committee (Chairman Gavaris and Legislators Collins, Hansut, Kovacs, Nolan, and Roberts)

Legislator Limina Grace Harmon and Legislator Sperry offer the following:

WHEREAS, as defined by the Harvard Business School diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) comprises, “Diversity: The presence and participation of individuals with varying backgrounds and perspectives, including those who have been traditionally underrepresented, Equity: Equal access to opportunities and fair, just, and impartial treatment, Inclusion: A sense of belonging in an environment where all feel welcomed, accepted, and respected”; and

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature values a diverse county workforce inclusive of individuals of different socioeconomic backgrounds, national origins, ages, races, disabilities, ethnicities, sexual orientation, religions, and genders and gender identities; and

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature considers DEI principles to be key tools in creating a welcoming, supportive and respectful workplace which, in turn, promotes increased sensitivity and empathy in county employees thereby improving interaction with and the provision of services to Ulster County residents; and

WHEREAS, in furtherance of a commitment to DEI, in December 2019 the Ulster County Legislature adopted an amendment to the Executive’s Proposed 2020 County Budget creating a dedicated Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) position; and

WHEREAS, among the CDO’s primary responsibilities is the development of the county’s Diversity and Inclusion policy and goals, recommendations to department heads regarding inclusion programs for the workforce, research concerning diverse populations and the development of proposals and alternative approaches for meeting Civil Service needs, assist in employee recruitment practices and outreach, development of training opportunities for county department heads, management and employees, and development and maintenance of a system for reporting on the progress of the county’s DEI initiatives; and

WHEREAS, in 2023 the Ulster County Executive announced her commitment to creating a more diverse and inclusive county government, elevated the CDO position from the Personnel Department to a “cabinet-level” position within the Executive’s Office, and announced that the CDO would “... help to ensure that equity, diversity, and inclusion are guiding values in how we operate and what we do as a County government.”; and

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WHEREAS, heated, divisive, and disrespectful behavior and speech, notably among elected officials, continues to increase in frequency and intensity nationally and in all levels of government, including in Ulster County; and

WHEREAS, these actions fuel hatred, division and discord in a person's personal and well as professional life, infiltrate the workplace and foster environments in direct contrast to DEI ideologies; and

WHEREAS, as Ulster County's elected leaders and lawmakers, it is imperative that DEI principles are understood, promoted and implemented at the highest levels of county government; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, advanced DEI training developed and coordinated by the Ulster County Diversity Officer shall be scheduled for and in cooperation with the Ulster County Executive, the members of the Ulster County Legislature, the Ulster County District Attorney, the Ulster County Sheriff, the Ulster County Clerk, and the Ulster County Comptroller, within 60 days of adoption of this Resolution; and, be it further

RESOLVED, the Ulster County Diversity Officer shall file notification with the Office of the Clerk of the Legislature once training has been scheduled in compliance with this Resolution,

and move its adoption.

ADOPTED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES:

NOES:

Referred to the Laws, Rules and Government Services Committee by the Committee:
Ways and Means on August 15, 2024.

Passed Committee: Laws, Rules and Government Services on _____.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:
NONE