

Providing Advanced Diversity, Equity And Inclusion Training To 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, in May 2024 the CDO announced that “Introduction to DEI” would be a component of the annual mandatory trainings for all county employees; and

WHEREAS, combative, 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 a more in depth understanding of the guiding principles of DEI are understood, promoted and implemented at the highest levels of county government; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Proposed Local Law 17 of 2023 passed by the Legislature in December 2023, the Personnel Director shall perform such other and related duties required by the County Executive or the Legislature; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Personnel Director shall coordinate with the Chief Diversity Officer to develop advanced DEI training designed specifically for elected officials in their capacity as leaders, appropriators, and law and policy makers; and, be it further

RESOLVED, the advanced DEI training shall be offered 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 sixty (60) days of adoption of this Resolution; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that upon election to the office of Ulster County Executive, Ulster County Legislator, Ulster County District Attorney, Ulster County Sheriff, Ulster County Clerk, and Ulster County Comptroller, the advanced DEI training must be offered within sixty (60) days of being sworn into office; and, be it further

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

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and move its adoption.

ADOPTED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES:

NOES:

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

No Action Taken in Committee: Laws, Rules and Government Services on September
12, 2024

Defeated in Committee: Laws, Rules and Government Services as amended on
October 10, 2024

Passed Committee: Ways and Means on _____.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:
NONE