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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 462 Session of 2011

INTRODUCED BY BROWNE, KITCHEN, KASUNIC, GORDNER, ERICKSON, FONTANA, WOZNIAK, ARGALL, M. WHITE, RAFFERTY, WASHINGTON, BREWSTER, SOLOBAY, TARTAGLIONE AND BOSCOLA, FEBRUARY 9, 2011

REFERRED TO AGING AND YOUTH, FEBRUARY 9, 2011

AN ACT

Providing for the establishment, implementation and administration of a comprehensive retiree welfare-to-work mentoring program for certain individuals; and imposing additional powers and duties on the Department of Aging.

The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

(1) Nationally, employment retention and job advancement for former welfare clients and other low-wage workers has become a major focus in work force development.

(2) Mentoring provides an avenue for job advancement for those clients so that they can continue to not only be productive but also to enjoy prosperity and stay on the job.

(3) The Retiree Mentoring Works Program is advantageous for business and government because it addresses problems on the employment site, thereby alleviating costly turnover for companies, and because it ensures job retention so welfare rolls may be reduced.

(4) By giving benefits to employers, they are made part owners in a program that is helping solve America's pressing

problem of transitioning people from welfare to work and that ensures that those people will remain productive, independent Americans with pride and dignity.

(5) In essence, retiree mentors pragmatically teach welfare clients to fight their war on poverty by working their way to prosperity.

(6) The Kansas Welfare to Work Senior Mentoring Initiative, known as "Mentoring Works," has been exceptionally effective, exceeding planned enrollment and job placement goals, generating enthusiastic interest among employers and moving individuals from welfare to work. The program has received an award from the United States Committee for the Celebration of the United Nations International Year of Older Persons 1999-United States Committee's National Awards for Excellence in Aging Programs. The United States Department of Labor named the program the winner of the 1999 "Architect of Change Award" for what labor defines as "the most innovative and forward thinking program in the workforce development system."

(7) Pennsylvania is fortunate to have the second largest percentage of older persons in the country and inherent in that distinction is the deep well of knowledge and expertise found in this Commonwealth's population of retired individuals. It is incumbent upon the General Assembly, therefore, to utilize the valuable network of retired Pennsylvanians who may be willing to share their knowledge and expertise for the benefit of all Pennsylvanians.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Short title.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Pennsylvania Retiree Mentoring Works Program Act.

Section 2. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this act shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Client." A resident of this Commonwealth who receives or has received welfare payments or who is a low-wage worker.

"Department." The Department of Aging of the Commonwealth.

"Program." The Pennsylvania Retiree Mentoring Works Program established by this act.

Section 3. Pennsylvania Retiree Mentoring Works Program.

(a) Establishment.--There is hereby established within the department a demonstration program to be known as the Pennsylvania Retiree Mentoring Works Program. The purpose of the program shall be to provide mentoring services to assist individuals who are transitioning from welfare or who are low-wage workers to find and retain employment.

(b) Mentors.--The department shall select retired individuals who are 55 years of age or older to serve as mentors in the program. The mentors shall assist clients in removing barriers that have been major obstacles to finding and retaining quality employment in rural, urban and suburban regions of this Commonwealth.

Section 4. Powers and duties of the Department of Aging.

(a) Mentor recruitment and training.--The department shall establish a process for recruiting quality retiree mentors, training those mentors and purchasing the needed technology to make the program operational.

(b) Funding opportunities.--The department may seek

potential funding opportunities in the form of grants through government agencies as well as private sector dollars to fund the program.

(c) Interagency cooperation.--The department shall work in cooperation with the Team PA Workforce Investment Board, the Department of Labor and Industry and the Department of Public Welfare to ensure the success of this program. The program shall act as a resource to the retention, advancement and rapid re-employment services of the Department of Public Welfare.

(d) Local cooperation.--The department shall work in cooperation with the designated area agencies established in section 2206-A of the act of April 9, 1929 (P.L.177, No.175), known as The Administrative Code of 1929, to provide local involvement in the program.

(e) Annual report.--The department shall prepare and submit an annual report to the General Assembly on the program. The report shall include pertinent information regarding the effectiveness of the program, as well as findings and recommendations for changes that may be deemed necessary to improve the program's outcome.

Section 5. Responsibilities of mentors.

Retiree mentors shall volunteer with the department and shall work as advisors, counselors and teachers to welfare clients, former welfare clients and other low-wage workers in one-on-one scenarios where they cover topics on job-seeking and job-keeping skills, work ethic, responsibility as a trusted employee and the difference between wants and needs.

Section 6. Rules and regulations.

The department shall develop and promulgate rules and regulations necessary to provide for the administration of the

program, no later than six months after the effective date of this section. Implementation of the program shall commence no later than six months following final approval of the regulations.

Section 7. Program expiration.

The program shall remain in effect from the effective date of this section through the close of the third full year of operation.

Section 20. Effective date.

This act shall take effect immediately.