

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 1511 Session of  
2014

INTRODUCED BY BROWNE, NOVEMBER 12, 2014

REFERRED TO AGING AND YOUTH, NOVEMBER 12, 2014

AN ACT

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

5 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

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

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

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

17 (4) By giving benefits to employers, they are made part  
18 owners in a program that is helping solve America's pressing  
19 problem of transitioning people from welfare to work and that

1 ensures that those people will remain productive, independent  
2 Americans with pride and dignity.

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

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

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

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

29 Section 1. Short title.

30 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Pennsylvania

1 Retiree Mentoring Works Program Act.

2 Section 2. Definitions.

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

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

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

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

11 Section 3. Pennsylvania Retiree Mentoring Works Program.

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

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

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

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

29 (b) Funding opportunities.--The department may seek  
30 potential funding opportunities in the form of grants through

1 government agencies as well as private sector dollars to fund  
2 the program.

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

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

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

#### 20 Section 5. Responsibilities of mentors.

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

#### 27 Section 6. Rules and regulations.

28 The department shall develop and promulgate rules and  
29 regulations necessary to provide for the administration of the  
30 program, no later than six months after the effective date of

1 this section. Implementation of the program shall commence no  
2 later than six months following final approval of the  
3 regulations.

4 Section 7. Program expiration.

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

8 Section 20. Effective date.

9 This act shall take effect immediately.