



Legislation Text

File #: 0846-2024, **Version:** 1

Background: This ordinance authorizes the City Clerk to enter into a grant agreement with the National Association of Social Workers in support of their development of a training program for behavioral healthcare workers to administer gender-affirming care in Ohio.

The mission of the National Association of Social Workers, Ohio Chapter, is to strengthen, support, and unify the social work profession, to promote the development of social work standards and practice, and to advocate for social policies that advance social justice and diversity.

This grant will defray the costs associated with developing an emergency training curriculum, entitled Navigating New Laws, for social workers and behavioral healthcare providers in Ohio that enables them to fully understand the newly introduced regulations in Ohio House Bill 68 (HB68) so that they may continue to provide high-quality care and services to the transgender and gender-diverse Ohioans that are impacted by these new rules. Grant funds may provide for the reimbursement of venue costs, marketing costs, supplies, services, and/or personnel costs. Grant funds will not be used for any food and/or beverage costs.

Fiscal Impact: Funding is available within the Job Growth subfund.

Emergency Designation: The National Association of Social Workers, Ohio Chapter, has already begun presenting their Navigating New Laws training program, and reimbursement of the funds spent by the organization to develop this program will be very helpful to them. Furthermore, the General Assembly continues its offensive campaign against transgender and queer individuals daily, and members of the community need to see City Council's support in a timely fashion. It is essential that the organization receives reimbursement funds in a timely manner.

To authorize the City Clerk to enter into a grant agreement with the National Association of Social Workers in support of their Navigating New Laws curriculum; to authorize an appropriation and expenditure within the Job Growth subfund; and to declare an emergency. (\$60,000.00)

WHEREAS, Columbus City Council seeks to promote policies and programs that support members of the queer community, including transgender people; and

WHEREAS, the Ohio General Assembly has enacted H.B. 68 to restrict transgender youth people's access to gender-affirming care; and

WHEREAS, the need to educate Ohio's behavioral healthcare workforce on the complexities of gender-affirming laws and rules is paramount to the health and wellbeing of transgender and gender-diverse Ohioans, as well as the retention of social workers and healthcare providers within the state. Transgender and gender-diverse youth already face disparities in mental health outcomes and anti-transgender legislation only exacerbates these issues. It is essential that mental healthcare providers do not shy away from working with transgender and gender non-conforming youth due to confusion and misunderstanding about these new regulations, or outsized fear of liability; and

WHEREAS, there is already a shortage of behavioral healthcare providers in Ohio. According to the Ohio Council of Behavioral Health & Family Service Providers' report, Breaking Point: Ohio's Behavioral Health Workforce Crisis, Ohio has a deficit of counselors, marriage and family therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, and social workers to meet the projected needs of our communities in 2030. Anxieties surrounding H.B. 68 may further dissuade the already limited behavioral healthcare professionals from providing youth services due to increased liability risk or even choose to

leave Ohio to practice in other states. Ohio already has a troubling behavioral healthcare provider shortage and cannot afford to lose more workers within this field. It is vital that these anxieties be met with accurate and clear information regarding changing regulations so Ohio can retain providers, and so transgender and gender non-conforming youth can access quality mental healthcare without leaving the state; and

WHEREAS, an emergency exists in that it is immediately necessary to authorize this agreement to ensure the timely support of gender-affirming care provider education for providers in the Central Ohio region for the immediate preservation of the public health, peace, property, safety and welfare; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

SECTION 1. That the City Clerk is hereby authorized to enter into a grant agreement with National Association of Social Workers to reimburse the organization for expenses incurred since February 29, 2024, when the organization published their guidance to healthcare providers and delivered their first training session as part of their Navigating New Laws training program.

SECTION 2. That the City Auditor is hereby authorized and directed to appropriate \$60,000.00 in the Job Growth subfund, fund 1000, subfund 100015, to the City Clerk per the accounting codes in the attachment to this ordinance.

SECTION 3. That the expenditure of \$60,000.00 or so much thereof as may be needed pursuant to the action authorized in SECTION 1 of this ordinance, is hereby authorized in the Job Growth subfund, fund 1000, subfund 100015 per the accounting codes in the attachment to this ordinance.

SECTION 4. That the funds necessary to carry out the purpose of this ordinance are hereby deemed appropriated, and the City Auditor shall establish such accounting codes as necessary.

SECTION 5. That the City Auditor is authorized to make any accounting changes to revise the funding source for all contracts or contract modifications associated with this ordinance.

SECTION 6. That for the reasons stated in the preamble hereto, which is hereby made a part hereof, this ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and approval by the Mayor or ten days after passage if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes the same.