



Legislation Text

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Int. No. 736-A

By Council Members Levine, The Speaker (Council Member Mark-Viverito), Chin, Dromm, Johnson, Lancman, Lander, Rose, Rosenthal, Rodriguez, Kallos, Menchaca, Barron and Van Bramer

A Local Law to amend the New York city charter, in relation to an office of civil justice

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Chapter 1 of the New York city charter is amended by adding a new section 13-b to read as follows:

§ 13-b. Office of civil justice. a. The mayor shall establish an office of civil justice. Such office may, but need not, be established in the executive office of the mayor and may be established as a separate office, within any other office of the mayor or within any department, the head of which is appointed by the mayor. Such office shall be headed by a coordinator who shall be appointed by the mayor or the head of such department. For the purposes of this section only, “coordinator” shall mean the coordinator of the office of civil justice.

b. Powers and duties. The coordinator shall have the power and the duty to:

1. advise and assist the mayor in planning and implementing for coordination and cooperation among agencies under the jurisdiction of the mayor that are involved in civil justice programs;
2. review the budget requests of all agencies for programs related to civil justice, and recommend to the mayor budget priorities among such programs and assist the mayor in prioritizing such requests;
3. prepare and submit to the mayor and the council an annual report of the civil legal service needs of low-income city residents and the availability of free and low-cost civil legal services to meet such needs, which shall include but not be limited to (i) an assessment of the civil legal service needs of such residents, as well as the type and frequency of civil legal matters, including but not limited to matters concerning housing,

health insurance, medical expenses and debts relating thereto, personal finances, employment, immigration, public benefits and domestic and family matters, (ii) identification and assessment of the efficacy and capacity of free and low-cost civil legal services available for such residents, (iii) identification of the areas or populations within the city in which low-income residents with civil legal service needs reside and (iv) identification of areas or populations within the city that have disproportionately low access to free and low-cost civil legal services;

4. study the effectiveness of, and make recommendations with respect to, the expansion of (i) free and low-cost civil legal services programs, (ii) mediation and alternative dispute resolution programs and (iii) mechanisms for providing free and low-cost civil legal services during and after emergencies; provided that the coordinator shall, to the extent practicable, prioritize the study of, and making of recommendations with respect to, the expansion of free and low-cost civil legal services programs intended to address housing-related civil legal service needs of low-income city residents;

5. serve as liaison for the city with providers of free and low-cost civil legal services and coordinate among such providers to (i) maximize the number of low-income city residents who obtain free and low-cost civil legal services sufficient to meet the needs of such residents and (ii) ensure that such residents have access to such services during and after emergencies;

6. provide outreach and education on the availability of free and low-cost civil legal service programs;  
and

7. perform other duties as the mayor may assign.

c. Five-year plan. Within one year after the completion of the first annual report required by paragraph three of subdivision b of this section, and in every fifth calendar year thereafter, the coordinator shall prepare and submit to the mayor and the council a five-year plan for providing free and low-cost civil legal services to those low-income city residents who need such services. Such plan shall also identify obstacles to making such services available to all those who need them and describe what additional resources would be necessary to do

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§ 2. This local law takes effect immediately.

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