

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 2 OF THE CITY CODE TO ESTABLISH
AN OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY AS A DIVISION IN CITY COUNCIL**

#0036

Sponsor:

Council
President
Congo

WHEREAS, the public school system has failed Wilmington students and their families for several decades; and

WHEREAS, Wilmington's failed education system has roots in systemic racism, poverty, and failed policies and laws such as redlining, the desegregation efforts of the 1970s, and the Neighborhood Schools Act of 2000; and

WHEREAS, the disparities in academic performance between Wilmington students and their peers who reside outside the city continue to widen; and

WHEREAS, public schools in Delaware are funded and controlled at the state level; and

WHEREAS, the City of Wilmington currently has no say in education policy and, specifically, the education of Wilmington students; and

WHEREAS, although there are several local educational advocacy groups, there is no single organization or institution that focuses solely on Wilmington students, regardless of where they attend school; and

WHEREAS, there is no local educational advocacy group that has the City's direct and permanent financial support; and

WHEREAS, having a City-funded educational advocate will help create a consistent, unified voice and facilitate collaboration between academic stakeholders to reduce the achievement gap for Wilmington students; and

WHEREAS, research has demonstrated that the factors impacting learning outcomes extend beyond classroom instruction. The educational advocate will evaluate the status of Wilmington students' achievement gaps and quality of life concerns to develop strategic priorities for improvement; engage, inform, and mobilize educational stakeholders to support legislative

change; advise Council on the allocation resources towards impactful policy solutions; and provide periodic assessments of the work of the Office of Educational Advocacy to determine the effectiveness of its activities and facilitate adaptations to maintain relevance to constituents' needs; and

WHEREAS, improving the quality of education of Wilmington students will also have a positive effect on public safety and the economy. The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that the average cost of an individual not finishing high school is \$272,000 over their lifetimes relative to those who complete high school. Failure to complete high school is associated with higher rates of incarceration, use of public assistance, lower tax contributions, and higher unemployment rates; and

WHEREAS, having a voice and influence in educational policy concerning Wilmington students, as well as taking legislative action in responses to quality-of-life issues that impact learning outcomes, is squarely within the purview of City Council; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the powers granted in City Charter § 2-104, City Council has the authority to establish an Office of Educational Advocacy and employ appropriate personnel.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON HEREBY ORDAINS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 2 of the City Code is hereby amended by adding a new Section 2-36 and renumbering the Reserved Sections by deleting the stricken language and adding the underlying language to read as follows:

Sec. 2-36. – Office of Educational Advocacy.

(a) Established

There is hereby established as a division within city council an office to be known as the Office of Educational Advocacy ("office"). The annual operating budget for the office shall be part of the annual operating budget for city council and shall be funded by the general fund.

- (b) The chief administrative official of the office shall be known as the “Director of Educational Advocacy.” The director shall have general supervisory authority over the operations of the office and shall report to the city council chief of staff.
- (c) The key policies and objectives of the office shall include, but are not limited to, the following:
- i) Identify resources, challenges, and opportunities for improving the educational experience of city students by working closely with families, schools, community organizations, and other educational advocacy groups.
 - ii) Adopt a “whole-child” approach focusing on economic stability, affordable housing, and safe communities so that city youth are prepared for the world.
 - iii) Advocate for the educational needs and rights of all students residing in the city and their families.
 - iv) Provide guidance to council on developing legislative solutions to effectuate change at the state and local levels.
 - v) Create a consistent, unified voice for all students residing in the city and their families to ensure their needs and concerns are represented at the state and local levels.
 - vi) Develop strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, including those from private and charter schools, and sustainable activities for ongoing support of city students in the educational process.
 - vii) Avoid duplication of services provided by other local educational advocacy groups.
- (d) The Director of Educational Advocacy shall prepare an annual report summarizing the office’s accomplishments of the prior fiscal year and the goals and strategies for attaining those goals for the upcoming fiscal year. The Director shall present a progress no less than every other month to the Education Youth & Families Committee. The annual report shall be submitted to city council no later than March 1 of each year and shall be made available on the website for city council. The city council chief of staff shall meet periodically with the director to monitor the progress in achieving the policies and objectives of the office and attaining the goals stated in the annual report.

Secs. 2-3637-2-55. – Reserved.

SECTION 2. This Ordinance shall become effective immediately upon its date of passage by the City Council and approval by the Mayor.

First Reading.....April 17, 2025

Second Reading....April 17, 2025

Third Reading.....

Passed by City Council,

President of City Council

ATTEST: _____
City Clerk

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2025

Mayor

SYNOPSIS: This Ordinance amends Chapter 2 of the City Code by creating an Office of Educational Advocacy as a division within City Council. The office will serve as an advocate for the educational needs and rights of Wilmington students, regardless of where they attend school, and formulate legislative solutions to improve the education of Wilmington students. The chief administrative official of the office will have the title of Director of Educational Advocacy.

FISCAL IMPACT: There will need to be annual appropriations to City Council for the Office of Educational Advocacy staff.