

CITY OF SEATTLE

ORDINANCE _____

COUNCIL BILL _____

..title

AN ORDINANCE relating to the organization of City government; creating an Office of the Employee Ombud; and adding Sections 3.15.020, 3.15.022, and 3.15.024 to the Seattle Municipal Code.

..body

WHEREAS, The City of Seattle (“City”) recognizes the value and importance of City employees

being able to do their best work to serve our communities, and that in order for this to happen the City must recognize employees’ inherent dignity, and provide safe and intimidation-free work environments, as well as consistent and equitable processes for addressing their concerns; and

WHEREAS, acts of discrimination and harassment have a harmful legacy globally, locally, and within The City of Seattle. Despite current policies, reporting, and investigation processes created to address and discourage workplace discrimination and harassment at the City, some current and past employees speak of workplaces still impacted by racial and sexual discrimination and harassment, including intimidation, mistreatment, exclusion, invisibility, and hostility; and

WHEREAS, the City formed an Anti-Harassment Interdepartmental Team (AH IDT) in 2018 to review the City’s current practices of responding to and preventing workplace discrimination and harassment. Based on Race and Social Justice Initiative survey results, employee focus group sessions conducted by the Seattle Office of Civil Rights regarding harassment in the City, and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) 2016 Select Task Force recommendations, the IDT made a set of holistic recommendations and proposed strategies to shift workplace culture to create a more

1 welcoming, inclusive, and safe work environment where everyone can do their best work;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, based on the consideration of the AH IDT recommendations, the Mayor proposes
4 that the Council create a new Office of the Employee Ombud that would:

5 1. Provide neutral and impartial assistance to City employees seeking to
6 access City resources to make, respond to, or resolve allegations of workplace
7 harassment, discrimination, or other misconduct;

8 2. Operate independently from the Seattle Department of Human Resources,
9 the Office for Civil Rights, and individual departments' human resources staff; and

10 3. Provide recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on improving
11 the City's Personnel Rules, complaint and investigations systems, workplace
12 expectations, and other applicable City processes and systems; NOW, THEREFORE,

13 **BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:**

14 Section 1. Office created. There is created within the Executive Department an Office of
15 the Employee Ombud.

16 Section 2. Sections 3.15.020, 3.15.022, and 3.15.024 are added to Chapter 3.15 of the
17 Seattle Municipal Code as follows:

18 **3.15.020 Office of the Employee Ombud created—Functions**

19 There is created within the Executive Department an Office of the Employee Ombud. The
20 mission of the Office of the Employee Ombud is to assist individual City employees in
21 understanding their options and resources regarding allegations of workplace misconduct and
22 navigating the City's processes and systems for reporting, investigating, and addressing

1 workplace conduct concerns including, but not limited to, allegations of harassment,
2 discrimination, retaliation, and other potential violations of City policies or Personnel Rules.

3 The Office of the Employee Ombud shall be authorized to perform the following
4 functions:

5 A. Provide neutral and impartial information to City employees as they engage with
6 the City's options for addressing allegations of workplace harassment, discrimination, and other
7 misconduct, while preserving employee confidentiality to the extent required under federal, state,
8 and City laws and policies.

9 B. Facilitate discussions to break down miscommunication that may have led to City
10 workplace conflict.

11 C. Report annually to the Mayor's Office and City Council on any issues that may
12 extend beyond the experience of individual employees and have a broader, systemic impact on
13 the City, including providing any recommendations to improve the City's Personnel Rules,
14 complaint and investigations systems, workplace expectations, and other applicable City
15 processes and systems. This report shall be submitted to the Mayor and Council by March 31 of
16 each year.

17 **3.15.022 Director of the Office of the Employee Ombud—Appointment and removal**

18 The Director of the Office of the Employee Ombud shall be appointed by the Mayor, subject to
19 confirmation by a majority vote of all members of the City Council.

20 **3.15.024 Director of the Office of the Employee Ombud—Duties**

21 The Director of the Office of the Employee Ombud shall be the head of the Office of the
22 Employee Ombud (OEO), shall be responsible for the administration of OEO, and shall:

23 A. Develop and manage all functions and responsibilities of OEO.

- 1 B. Hire, supervise, and discharge OEO staff.
- 2 C. Provide input to the Mayor and City Council on the performance of OEO and
- 3 recommend process improvements to better serve employees.

