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TO: The Honorable Detroit City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director 
Legislative Policy Division Staff

DATE: March 8, 2023

RE: **RESOLUTION ENCOURAGING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SENIOR TECHNOLOGY LITERACY PROGRAM**

Council Member Mary Waters requested that the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) draft a RESOLUTION ENCOURAGING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SENIOR TECHNOLOGY LITERACY PROGRAM.

Please contact us if we can be of any further assistance.

BY COUNCIL MEMBER MARY WATERS

RESOLUTION ENCOURAGING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SENIOR TECHNOLOGY LITERACY PROGRAM

- WHEREAS,** The mission of the Detroit City Council is to promote the economic, cultural and physical welfare of Detroit’s citizens and residents through Charter-mandated legislative functions; and
- WHEREAS,** The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting recession impacted workers over the age of 55 more than any other age group, forcing people into early retirements and jeopardizing their financial security; and
- WHEREAS,** The lack of financial security and opportunity for senior citizens leads to severe physical and mental health challenges, which is often exacerbated by the increased difficulty and stress seniors experience when seeking new employment due to age discrimination by employers; and
- WHEREAS,** Due to a variety of factors, seniors often have diminishing social interactions as they age, leading to loneliness. Research has shown that loneliness, much like stress, has detrimental impacts on the mental, emotional, and overall physical health¹ of the elderly; and
- WHEREAS,** Older citizens represent a growing proportion of the city’s population, yet there is no unified City-led effort to support senior citizens in re-entering the workforce; and
- WHEREAS,** While an increase in the senior population is often viewed by policy-makers as a negative economic liability, the City should instead consider that seniors who are ready, willing and able to work and share their knowledge with others, are a valuable and abundant resource; and
- WHEREAS,** Senior workers often have a wealth of experience that can only be gained through time and exposure. Whether their experience is with a craft, building a rapport with clients, communication skills, decision-making, or problem-solving, seniors can bring immense value to any business or organization; and
- WHEREAS,** Even with their skills and experience, many seniors find themselves at a disadvantage when it comes to mastering the new technologies required to obtain even meager employment; and
- WHEREAS,** A combination of older and younger workers creates a diverse, intergenerational environment, where younger workers can benefit from the mentorship of experienced seniors, and where seniors can benefit by learning to improve their technological literacy from younger workers; and

¹ Social isolation, loneliness in older people pose health risks (<https://www.nia.nih.gov/news/social-isolation-loneliness-older-people-pose-health-risks>)

WHEREAS, In addition to improving the technological literacy of the Detroit’s seniors, providing seniors with the opportunity to continue working, while interacting and sharing knowledge with others, has the potential to significantly improve their financial, physical, and mental health; and

WHEREAS, The combination of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money, Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act dollars, and private investment via the District Detroit project, represent a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help our most vulnerable citizens like never before; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, That the Detroit City Council hereby strongly urges the Administration to establish the Senior Technology Literacy Program, henceforth known as Ready to Work (RTW) to provide education and job opportunities to City of Detroit residents 65 years of age or older who wish to remain in or re-enter the job market; **THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED, That RTW should work to pair senior citizens with younger workers, helping to foster collaboration that enables older workers to impart their experiences to younger workers, while younger workers can share their technological know-how to bridge intergenerational gaps; **THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED, That RTW should build on the successful Grow Detroit’s Young Talent (GDYT) program and provide not only training, but also direct-placement job opportunities for program participants in local businesses with a guaranteed livable wage; **THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED, That ideally, RTW should be funded via allocations from the as-of-yet unallocated ARPA and CARES Act dollars received by the City, in addition to private funding from the Community Benefits funds allocated by recipients of public tax incentives, including the developers of the District Detroit project; **THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED, That RTW should be a City-wide program with branches in each Council District to ensure that all Detroit seniors are able to participate; and

RESOLVED, That RTW should generate biannual reporting on program results, including participation, successful placements, and plans for expansion in the future; **THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY**

RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be forwarded to Mayor Mike Duggan, Governor Gretchen Whitmer, and all interested public media, civil society, educational and civil groups and individuals working towards this goal.