



# City leaders call for civil service reforms to increase jobs

City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams is advocating for changes to civil services rules to make it easier to hire people who have been homeless, in the foster care system or incarcerated or detained.

"The city is very short right now on filling and placing certain jobs within the city," Adams said. "We want to take a look at how to best target those who have been underserved traditionally."

Adams made her remarks Monday at an equity-focused forum organized by the Center for an Urban Future. She and Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright spoke about the ways city government can create incentives and lower barriers to fill jobs.

Forum participants said the city isn't doing enough to leverage its 300,000-person workforce to create new economic opportunities and to level the playing field for hiring and pay equity among races and genders.

The speaker said the council should pass legislation that requires the Department of Citywide Administrative Services to create mechanisms that prepare the formerly homeless, those exiting the justice system, and young people aging out of foster care for civil-service careers.

Kenneth Adams, president of LaGuardia Community College, noted that Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan recently took 300 positions in state government and removed the bachelor's degree requirement; the move opened thousands of positions to previously blocked candidates, Adams said.

The city should use its negotiations over new municipal labor contracts, he said, to do the same thing for entry-level jobs in administrative work across city agencies.

"How do we roll that back and open up those opportunities for tens of thousands of people willing to work?" he said. "The truth is we have to look at the city as an employer, as the biggest employer in this town." Wright also pushed for more local hiring. She said the city should advocate for state legislation that would enable the city to use its contracting authority to mandate that vendors hire local applicants. Some of the largest contracts the city holds are with hospitals, health care companies, construction companies and the Hotel Association of New York City.

"The city is the biggest employer," Wright said. "It's 300,000 people, and so that is a very powerful engine to really advance opportunity. Right now, the City of New York doesn't have the ability to require any company that it procures with on a big project to hire people locally. If we could do that it would really help."

She said the community-hiring legislation in Albany could be tailored to ZIP codes and neighborhoods and include carve-outs for specific percentages of new hires and job applicants. "It's really creating all of the conditions to enable economic mobility," she said.

## **New and existing pipelines**

Mayor Eric Adams' administration has initiated workforce development including:

- The Career Readiness and Modern Youth Apprenticeship program, a multiyear plan to connect more than 3,000 public school students to paid apprenticeships at Accenture, Amazon, Bloomberg Philanthropies, JPMorgan Chase and other companies.

- The \$18.6 million Pathways to Industrial and Construction Careers, an initiative to place 2,300 low-income New Yorkers into jobs at industrial or construction companies in the next three years.
- The Future of Workers Task Force, a joint effort by the City University of New York, the Department of Education and the Mayor's Office of Talent and Workforce Development to coordinate operations and create an annual plan for job creation.
- CUNY's \$16 million Inclusive Economy Initiative. Funded by city and private partners, the program creates a campus-to-industry pipeline for the university's undergraduates and graduates.

Another place that Speaker Adams and Wright agreed the city could look to expand workforce development opportunities is the city's Summer Youth Employment Program.

Wright noted that this year's SYEP received 175,000 applications for 110,000 spots. Going forward, the business community could fill the gap for those who can't get in, she suggested.

"The business community can more than pick that up," she said. "We've created a model. We've got a template: 'Here, you can do this.'"

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