

DWSB Portable Benefits Subcommittee Meeting Notes

August 19, 2020, 6-8pm, via Webex

- Attending: Baylie, Silvia, Etelbina, Andra, Jordan, Jasmine (OLS), Cariño (interpreter), Lexi (community member), Divya (NDWA Labs), Palak (NDWA Labs), Andrew (Legal Voice)
- Update from OLS
 - Mayor's office is convening task forces around COVID recovery
 - Interest in including portable benefits as part of this process
- Presentation from NDWA Labs
 - Alia is by workers, for workers (not a private business, no profit motive)
 - Primary (or sole?) source of funding will be employers, so we need to be realistic about cost and mix of benefits.
 - Simpler is better; mandate should be consistent across all types of domestic workers.
 - Which benefits?
 - PTO
 - Other local/state benefits that could be expanded to domestic workers
 - Single system to manage the benefits
 - Mandating a \$/hour accrual
 - Enforcement mechanism
 - Budget for benefits platform, enforcement, awareness
 - Mandate should be as specific as possible to avoid getting bogged down in regulatory process
 - Components of a new system
 - Platform
 - Way to track hours
 - Way for employers to make contributions
 - Way for workers to redeem benefits
 - Enforcement
 - System for submitting employer address so that mandate information can be mailed (helps to get around awkward conversations between workers and employers)
 - A way for workers to file complaints
 - Awareness
 - Campaigns for both workers and employers (think about budget)
 - What will it cost (very rough estimates)?
 - Minimum to build platform: \$200k
 - Ongoing maintenance: \$50k/year
 - Cost of governing agency for enforcement
 - Awareness for workers: \$50k
 - Employee awareness: TBD (but considerably more expensive than for workers)
 - Where is funding coming from in Philadelphia?
 - Still unclear because of the regulatory process
 - Likely a partnership between city and philanthropy
 - What are possible sources of funding?
 - The funding for the benefits themselves need to come from the employers (so need to think about what will be realistic)
 - The funding sources for building the platform and infrastructure (up-front costs), along with ongoing maintenance costs, are less clear (no city funding available right now)

- The funding sources for awareness/marketing/outreach and also enforcement are also less clear
 - We will likely need to look to philanthropy (e.g. Seattle Foundation, Social Justice Fund), especially for upfront development costs
 - Accessing Alia
 - Web-based, so through phone or computer
 - Need a phone number
 - Don't need a bank, since PTO benefits can be distributed through a pre-paid debit gift card
 - But could also have an option to do direct deposit to a bank account
 - No cash option currently, but is something that could be built
 - Gift cards are preferable to apps like Venmo or CashApp, since most workers prefer the simplicity of the cards
 - Possible enforcement costs
 - When a new law is passed, we need to consider policy, outreach, and enforcement
 - We'll need to push for staff time
 - Enforcement office is understaffed, and a hiring freeze is now in place
 - With understaffing, there would likely be long delays between intake and action
 - Ideally, we'd want an additional policy staffer and an additional enforcement staffer (\$150-200k/year)
 - What is happening in Philly?
 - The only mandated benefit is PTO (1 hour for every 40 hours worked)
 - How do we account for different employment structures (e.g. a full-time nanny vs a cleaner with many different employers)? How can we make this equitable?
 - Worker councils can discuss this to see what is most equitable
 - Could also do a flat rate of PTO accrual per hour worked (e.g. \$1 of PTO for each hour worked)
 - Could also look to create a standard based on other jobs in the economy (e.g. two weeks vacation, seven paid federal holidays), and then work backwards to determine what the accrual rate needs to be to give people this time off
 - Regardless of what benefits we want to provide, the goal is actually to allow workers to accrue a pot of money that could then be used for a variety of purposes (and give workers the choice to use the money however they want) -- so, a single pool of money is best
 - What happens if an employer wants to contribute more than the minimum (e.g. an employer who only engages a worker for a few hours a month)?
- Timeline for budget
 - Mayor is preparing budget now; council will start considering it in third week of September through October
 - We will need to come up with a very specific request, in coordination with the rest of the board, and figure out what the overall priorities for the board are
 - Break things down into the smallest possible buckets
 - Then put together a lobbying strategy to get support from council
 - What do we want to ask for this year, and what do we want to postpone until next year?
- Budget buckets
 - Development costs
 - Platform maintenance
 - Agency and staffing costs
 - Outreach (need to coordinate with Outreach subcommittee)
 - Enforcement costs

- Actual benefits costs
- There was agreement that the platform should just be a single pot of money, rather than a range of pre-defined benefits
 - But it's important to educate employers about how many different benefits need to be paid for with that pot of money (e.g. PTO, health care, retirement, child care, etc.)
- People who can help write policy proposals
 - Bailey
 - Silvia + another Casa Latina member
 - Andrew
 - Fair Work Center
 - Hand in Hand
 - Send email to DWSB community partner list
- Public comment
 - Andrew: One other benefit that we might be able to work on through existing structures would be workers comp (getting the state law amended to include domestic workers)
 - Cariño: WAISN is already working on this