

2023 Seattle City Council Budget Action

Council Budget Action: Agenda

Tab	Action	Option	Version
SDHR	510	A	001-2023

Budget Action Title: Pass CB 120444 – SDHR ADR Consolidation Ordinance

Ongoing: Yes Has Budget Proviso: No

Has CIP Amendment: No Has Attachment: No

Primary Sponsor: Budget Committee

Council Members:

Staff Analyst: Karina Bull

Council Bill or Resolution: 120444

Date		Total	LH	TM	KS	AP	DJ	DS	AL	BC	SN
	Yes	0									
	No	0									
	Abstain	0									
	Absent	0									

Budget Action Description:

This Council Budget Action recommends passage of Council Bill (CB) 120444, the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Ordinance. The bill would amend Seattle Municipal Code 4.04.075 to consolidate ADR services for City employees in the Office of the Employee Ombud (OEO) and discontinue provision of these services by the Seattle Department of Human Resources (SDHR).

In 2001, the City established an ADR program in the Personnel Department (now known as SDHR) to prevent or minimize the escalation of workplace disputes through mediation, training, and group facilitation services for City employees. In 2019, the City established the OEO to provide a safe space for City employees to report workplace issues, discuss concerns about inappropriate workplace conduct, and explore options for resolving conflict. Since the OEO uses similar methods as the ADR program to address conflict resolution, the existence of both programs created a duplication of services.

In recognition of the overlap between ADR and OEO services, SDHR began winding down their ADR program over the course of several years. The 2021 Adopted Budget approved the Mayor’s proposal to eliminate 1.0 FTE (Strategic Advisor 1) tasked with directing the ADR program. SDHR assigned primary oversight of the ADR program to the HRIU Director, outsourced mediations for individual employees to mediators associated with the King County ADR program (i.e., Interlocal Conflict Resolution Group), referred some inquiries directly to the OEO, scaled back or eliminated services that could be handled by OCR, and retained 0.5 FTE (Dispute Resolution Mediator) to coordinate third-party mediations, provide trainings, and implement the ADR Race and Social Justice Initiative plan. In May 2022, the 0.5 FTE (Dispute Resolution Mediator) position in SDHR became vacant and SDHR transferred all ADR work to OEO. The 2023 Proposed Budget proposes eliminating this position.

Since OEO already provides a wide variety of conflict resolution services and has been gradually absorbing

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work from the ADR program since the office’s inception, this legislation is not expected to have significant impact on OEO’s operations or adversely impact City employees.

If Council does not pass this legislation, SDHR would need to retain the ADR program in the department and could house services in another division, such as the HRIU.