



Allentown

435 Hamilton Street
Allentown, Pa. 18101

Minutes - Final

City Council

Wednesday, July 22, 2026

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

Special Council Meeting

Roll Call

Review of Bill 54

[15-8524](#)

Bill 54

Amending the City of Allentown Public Health Code by adding Chapter 421, Paid Sick Leave Act, to improve the public health by requiring certain businesses to allocate sick time to employees.

Attachments: [Bill 54 Sick Day Initiative](#)

[Citizens' Rights and Participation \(1\)](#)

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated to give her three more minutes before we start the meeting ok. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that he is ready to roll.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated you are ready. She stated good evening and welcome to the Special Council meeting. She stated Mr. Hanlon can you please do the Roll Call.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that Mr. Napoli is not here. He stated that madame vice president the quorum is presented on so now they are ready.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated thank you. Than you, Mr. Hanlon. She stated that president Napoli is unable to attend this evening due to a previously scheduled vacation. The purpose of this Special Meeting is to review a citizen initiative. Now, noted as Bill 54 which will amend the city's Health Code to require certain businesses to provide basic time to employees. Under the city's Home Rule Charter citizens who officially gather the necessary signature of Allentown residents may introduce or repeal legislation may have special meetings and may place items to the Council Agenda for discussion. On June 22, 2026, Council Clerk sent a memo to Council determining that the Citizens Petition with the signatures submitted, was significant. President Napoli then placed the item on the next available agenda which occurred on July 15th and then he scheduled

this meeting. She stated that she wants to thank the Petitioners Committee and the circulators for their work in gathering the requirement signatures as well as our staff for the close review of the petitions. The citizens initiative process parallels that legislative bill, however, if Council does not adopt the proposed the citizens evaluation moves forward to Lehigh County for placement on the next municipal election ballot, allowing voters to decide via a referendum process so this evening, they will proceed as they typically do with legislative matters. She stated hearing first from the Petitioners, followed by comments from the administration and then Council and then the public. After the discussion, they will entertain a Motion from any Councilmember who wishes to offer one so now they are ready. They would like to hear from the Petitioner.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated good evening.

Ms. Diana Robinson stated good evening, co Executive Director of Make the Road Pennsylvania. She stated that they have an office right here on 7th Street. They work with the community here in Allentown. She stated that they have Diana Espinal (sp), who was one of the Petitioners and that was part of the first Petition to put forward the Petitioner for signatures and also collected signatures and share and follow up why this is important to her and stated that she will interpret her remarks.

Diana Espinal (sp) stated in Spanish her name and talked about the Petition. She stated about Allentown Make the Road, Pennsylvania. She talked about adding a warehouse. Thank you.

Ms. Diana Robinson thanked Diana and stated that she was going to translate Diana's remarks and stated good evening, her name is Diana Espinal and have been an Allentown resident since 2023 and a member leader for Make the Road Pennsylvania. She stated while she was working in a warehouse in the Lehigh Valley, she faced a situation where she was ill with a throat infection, a fever and very high blood pressure. She stated at the time, she was working in a warehouse where missing a shift was resulted in accumulation of points that would lead to her termination. She stated that on another occasion, her daughter was sick, yet she could not stay home with her even though she was very ill with vomiting and intestinal pain because missing work could have resulted in her being fired. Working Class families like hers have been faced with deciding between our health and our families and being able to keep up with our bills for years. She stated that this initiative will give all workers across the city regardless of income or race, the ability to take care of their families and themselves without fear of losing their paycheck or their job. She collected signatures for the Petition to get this on the ballot. Residents from across the city of Allentown express joy to learn about the possibility of having paid sick

days. The opportunity to be able to care for sick children and not get other sick at work without fear of losing their paycheck or job would be a great relief. She stated that she looks forward to the opportunity to voice her support for this initiative at the polls in November. Thank you. She stated that she also would like to add that this was a joint effort working with community members from across the city of Allentown. They worked with Unite Here Local 274. They also worked with SEIU. She stated that all folks collecting signatures interested in seeing this move forward and happen. She stated that voters decide what would be best for the city of Allentown. Thank you.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated thank you. She stated now, let's hear from the administration, Ms. Kistler.

Ms. Vicky Kistler stated members of City Council, the administration supports good Public Health Legislation and they are supporters of Fair Labor Practices. The city of Allentown administration does not support Bill 54 - 2026 which would amend the city's health code to require all businesses within the city limits to provide Paid Sick Leave to employees. She stated that as you are aware, this ordinance was brought to you as a Charter Citizen Initiative Referendum. It was not proposed by the city of Allentown's city administration, Allentown's City Council, any administrative board, commission or third party agency that functions under the health bureau or Lehigh County. As such, there is no research, investigations, studies or data collected by the city or the city affiliated public health organization that shows the ordinance should protect the public health or assist in disease prevention and control. There are currently over 20,500 active in city license businesses that the Health Bureau would be required to monitor for compliance and enforcement. The city does not currently have staffing or administrative processes in place to comply with this ordinance. Implementation of this ordinance would require significant investment and additional staffing which may result in doubling or tripling the city's business license fees and/or property tax increase. The measures will be in addition to the cost of the businesses after this benefit. She stated finally many of the people who live in Allentown, do not work in Allentown and many people who work in Allentown live elsewhere. Approximately, 80 percent of our residents in the workforce, leave the city for their employment and conversely, approximately 80 percent of the jobs in the city are filled by commuters that live outside the city. This ordinance will protect the public health or assist in disease prevention and control for this community. If compelled to implement the ordinance, they believe it will put the city at a competitive disadvantage with neighboring communities and expanding new small business opportunities in the city. The administration believes that it would be more appropriate for this ordinance to be implemented and managed at a county or state level or government.

Thank you.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated thank you, Ms. Kistler. And, now have comments from the dais. She asked if there were any comments from the dais. She asked again, any comments from the dais stating excuse me.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that she would like to make a Motion at this time or does she have to wait.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated ok. She stated do you know what and asked is it possible that you can make your comment or rather Ms. Affa do the Motion before you make the comment. She stated ok, fine, go ahead Ms. Affa.

Ms. Candida Affa stated most likely, the Bill will end up as a Referendum if you pass it, it will become law and if you reject it, it goes to a referendum. Let the voters make the determination in the city and other interest can engage in educational process going forward. She stated that if they forward this today, they will alleviate any issues related to the timing and getting it on the General Election this year.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated ok she would like to Second your Motion, Ms. Affa. She stated those in favor, say I.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that so you need a first and a second and before a vote, you do need public comment.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated ok, definitely. She stated so now, umm, go ahead.

Mr. Cristian Pungo stated thank you and so he just wants to say he thinks the method to be able to do this is incredibly powerful from the standpoint of the Charter and thinks that is great. He stated that his only concern is that he believes it is and understands the spirit of it. He thinks it is really focused on helping Allentown residents. He stated that his only concern in the process is that as Council here, they can't amend or change anything when a Citizens Initiative comes up. It is pretty much presented and then it is moved on to the voters. He will only like to say that he is concerned a little bit from a standpoint of service providers and small businesses because this could negatively impact that and he thinks it is worth evaluating. He didn't see that evaluation in the current one so he would just encourage the voters when and if Ms. Motion passes which he seems it is because it sounds like he did take time to read through the legislation because it is impactful and could potentially harm some Allentown residents so thank you. She stated thank you and asked if there were any other comments from the dais. She stated go ahead, Mr. Pungo.

Mr. Cristian Pungo stated that he will be making these comments both in English and Spanish just for the folks that are here and kind of take advantage of that. He kind of agrees and understand there are definitely some impacts that what we see and he does think, you know Ms. Kistler mentioned a good point of you know who really be benefiting from this and he would hope and think that the vision that they see from the city is more of the folks who live here to work here. He just know there are so many people that leave the city and he would hate for people to have a false safety thinking about their getting paid sick time if they are working in Breinigsville or if they are working in Macungie or somewhere else. He stated that is not to say that the residents can't voice their opinions. He began making his statement in Spanish.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated go ahead, Ms. Gerlach.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated Dr. Mota, you already thanked folks for doing this. She echoed that and stated thank you stating this is a lot of work. It ain't easy. She stated that she has been there, done that. She stated thank you all for you not working on an issue that's important. She stated so hopefully it seems like this will pass and it will be up to the voters. If the voters want this, they will say yes and if they don't, they will say no and then they will all move accordingly she guesses. She stated that she believes if the voters say yes and then it becomes law and then the city law, they could then go back and amend.

Mr. Jeremy Binder stated that it was a two year moratorium.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated a two year moratorium. She stated got you.

Mr. Jeremy Binder stated that he is not an attorney, but that is his understanding from it.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated yes. She stated alright and it is good to know. She stated that she is sure if this was to pass there be many conversations of legal nature from various entities so thank you.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated that she just thinks that it is important that and to know that more than 2,000 people signed this Petition and they just have to you know honor it. She stated that it is important to let the voters decide if they want this Bill. She also think that it is important to also educate the community. She stated that she believes that although it was 2000 or more signatures that you guys collected. It is extremely important that you guys go out there and do the harder work which is to educate that community. She stated that's all she has to say. She asked if there were any other

comments. She stated go ahead Ms. Affa. Ms. Affa, go ahead. You said you had a comment.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated so they

Ms. Candida Affa stated yes, she was a small business owner for 38 years and her fear is and she only had eight or nine employees. She stated that she had an established business. Her fear is that it would be people leaving. We want people to come into our city and her fear is that she doesn't know how it would have affected her and since she was already established she could have moved almost anywhere. She stated that one of her fears is that this could happen. She stated that she wants people to come into our city and this might be a deterrent and that is one of her concerns because it does put a lot more pressure on you as an owner because people can take advantage of it. She stated that is her fear. They would not need people coming in and not leaving.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated that it is valid. It is valid. She stated that her concerns has been with small businesses to. The sentiment that everyone has, but again, they went through the process and now it is going to be on the ballot so they have to honor it and see what happens. Yes, and later on, they could amend and could change a few things. She stated that she does agree with ms. Gerlach, there might be a lot of people posting it. They will have to see what's going to happen, but at least the power is in the people. She stated you know what she means and it shows that when people work in unity things happen. She stated ok. Things happen. She asked if there were any other comments. She stated ok, so.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that they have a request to speak from Diana.

Ms. Diana Robinson stated that she does have a quick comment in reference to some of the things.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated go ahead.

Ms. Diana Robinson stated thank you so much for sharing concerns and what you all are thinking about and also wanted to share that this similar legislation has been passed in both the city of Philadelphia and also in Pittsburgh and it has had positive impacts stating you know and she thinks sometimes they have to think about the greater good and in a time that we are living with a lot of public health crisis whether it is Covid and other infectious diseases. How are we also keeping the public safe. She stated that they are dedicated and very intentional about how we will be talking to voters about this. In their collection of signatures, they had to be very clear that this was for Allentown City residents and also in terms of how the policy

would work. Employers who have 15 employees or more, those employees after 30 hours, accrue one hour of sick time with a maximum of 72 hours for the entire calendar year and for employers to have less the 15 employees, it would be 30 hours worked, and one hour accrued for those every 30 hours is one hour accrued and then it would be 48 hours total for the entire calendar year. She stated just putting it into context like what it would be. She stated thank you again for your time and thank you for your work on this.

Dr. Cynthia Mota thanked Ms. Diana Robinson. She asked if there were any other comments, Mr. Hanlon.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that they had something from Diana.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated so that was it.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that was it.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated ok. She stated so that's it then. So at this moment, this ah.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated no more comments.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated no more comments.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated ok, on the Ms. Affa's Motion forward the initiative to the Chief Clerk of Elections and another appropriate officials at Lehigh County Voter Registration to be placed on the upcoming General Election as a Referendum for the registered voters to act on. He stated Madam Vice President, I have 6 yays and no nays.

Dr. Cynthia Mota thanked Mr. Hanlon and stated again, she would like to thank the public for being here and initiating and organizing so at this point, this meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

A motion was made by Candida Affa, seconded by Cynthia Mota, the Bill will end up as a Referendum if you pass it, it will become law and if you reject it, it goes to a referendum. Let the voters make the determination in the city and other interest can engage in educational process going forward. If they forward this today, they will alleviate any issues related to the timing and getting it on the General Election this year.

Yes: 6 - Cynthia Mota, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, Jeremy Binder, and Cristian Pungo

Absent: 1 - Santo Napoli

ADJOURNED: 6:23 PM

