



# The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

The DC Fiscal Policy Institute blog  
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January 28, 2016

## Two Important Ways to Help Vulnerable DC Residents Find and Keep Jobs

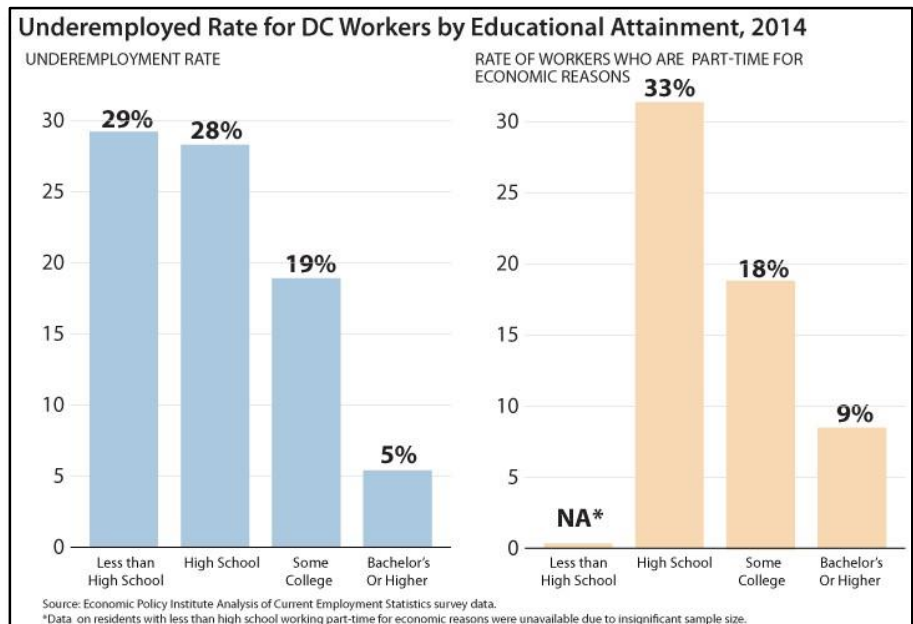
By Ilana Boivie

The DC City Council held a hearing on Tuesday on two bills that would help many DC residents find and maintain employment in the District just when they need it most.

The Employment Protections for Victims of Domestic Violence Amendment Act of 2015 would ensure that domestic violence victims are not retaliated against by their employer in the case that they miss work due to their domestic violence issue. And the Fair Credit History Screening Act of 2015 would prohibit employers from asking about a job applicant's credit history before they are made an offer of employment.

These are very important steps, because increasingly in the District, residents other than those with the most advanced education are finding it harder and harder to find quality employment. All of the wage growth that the city has experienced in the last 35 years has been among those with a college degree; other residents have actually seen their wages fall, adjusting for inflation. Nearly one-third of residents with less than a high school degree are underemployed – either unemployed, working part-time involuntarily, or too discouraged to look for work – while the rate for those with a Bachelor's degree or higher is just 5 percent.<sup>1</sup>

Victims of domestic violence should not be discriminated against at their job for needing to take time off to deal with their issue. Because they are already in a vulnerable state, keeping their job is all the more important



to help stabilize their situation. In addition, survivors need to be able to support themselves financially, as they are likely to have precarious living situations, and need the security of a regular paycheck in order to pay their rent.

People with bad credit scores shouldn't face added hurdles to getting a job, either. Having low credit is not in and of itself a measure of job worthiness, and therefore should not be taken into account in employment decisions. Being low income can by itself lead to having a low credit score.<sup>2</sup> Low-income families face regular challenges to pay their bills, and can easily fall behind financially. So, a lower income worker may have a poor credit score despite trying to make good financial choices. In addition, those with low credit scores are likely to experience greater financial difficulties in other areas – for example, being approved for credit or purchasing a car or a home – so holding down a job is even more critical in getting them back up on their feet financially.

These two bills would go a long way in helping some of DC's most vulnerable workers find and maintain work in order to adequately support their families.

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<sup>1</sup> DC Fiscal Policy Institute, 2015. Two Paths to Better Jobs for DC Residents: Improved Training and Stronger Job Protections.”

<sup>2</sup> USA Today. “Demographics weigh on credit scoring.” March 31, 2007.