

**Testimony of Michael Volforte, Interim Director  
on behalf of the Governor's Office of Employee Relations  
February 11, 2014**

Chairman DeFrancisco, Chairman Farrell, and members of the Committees. I serve as the Interim Director of the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to address Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget for 2014-2015 as it relates to GOER.

At GOER, my staff and I work every day to foster constructive and cooperative relationships with the State workforce and their representatives, the State employee unions, in order to create the *New New York* that Governor Cuomo envisions. We advise State agencies and their leadership on their contractual and legal obligations as they work toward a goal of delivering high quality services for the public in the most efficient and cost-effective manner so that we have a government that truly works for the people of this state. We educate and train the State workforce and we take a leadership role in ensuring that the State meets its obligations in enforcing the rights of employees to work in a safe and discrimination free environment.

During the past year, GOER has worked with the Business Services Center, the Office of Information Technology Services and the various agencies engaged in the Call Center Consolidation project as they move forward with implementing and finalizing their transformation projects. GOER has also worked closely with the Department of Civil Service, Division of the Budget, Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, Office of Mental Health, Office of Children and Family Services and many others as part of a work group tasked with overseeing the State's employment continuity efforts. The State is taking extraordinary measures to ensure that employees are offered opportunities to remain employed either within their current agencies or with other State agencies. The State has expanded the use of the Agency Reduction Transfer List or *ARTL* process so that more individuals have opportunities for more positions. Where opportunities were not available, we have begun the process of analyzing skills and qualifications for individuals with the goal of providing training

opportunities so that these individuals can return to State service in new roles. We believe that our efforts over the past year have paid off as evidenced by our success in retaining the vast majority of employees affected by restructuring.

Last year, we shared with you our vision for the State's approach to human resource management in order to ensure a talented and diverse workforce. During the past year, GOER and Civil Service have made great strides in aligning the training activities of our respective agencies. Our first joint initiative, Strategic Human Resources Management Training, was conceived, planned, and developed in 2013 and launched in January 2014. This program will set the stage for a complete transformation of the Human Resource role in New York State government, from one that is transactional to strategic partner for agencies to utilize in workforce planning, performance management, employee engagement, and talent development.

At GOER, we are mindful of the rights of our employees and of our obligations to enforce those rights. Consistent with this vision and an enterprise approach to training, we designed and delivered two enterprise wide policy courses in Equal Employment Opportunity, and Sexual Harassment Prevention for all our employees. This training not only provided a consistent and uniform message but, for the first time, the State trained each of its employees on *all* of the Federal and State protections that are afforded to employees as a matter of law, rule and Executive Order. Other statewide initiatives developed and delivered this year include on-line courses in Chemical Labeling and Language Access, an expanded statewide Learning and Development series, two Leadership Development programs, and a train-the-trainer program in Human Trafficking Awareness.

This year, we will continue to expand enterprise wide training programs for employees with programs ranging from reasonable accommodation to internal controls. The goal of these programs embodies the Governor's commitment to assuring that all managers, supervisors and employees alike – know all of their rights and their obligations regarding workplace conduct

and are given the skills to support the work that they do. We will continue delivery of the Strategic Human Resources Management training, and complete the development of a new series titled Essentials in Supervision. Through our Statewide Learning and Development series, we will continue a blended learning approach incorporating on-line, classroom, print, and video learning components.

During the past year, we successfully reached a fair contract with the United University Professions (UUP) for professors and other professionals in the State University of New York for the period July 2, 2011 through July 1, 2016. This contract included an agreement covering terms and conditions for lifeguards, who had been without an agreement since 2003. The agreement rebalanced health insurance premium contributions, included sensible changes in employee health plan design, and controlled wage growth, including a two-year Deficit Reduction Plan. To date, we've completed negotiations with unions that represent over 94% of the State workforce. Negotiations are currently underway with other unions that represent employees in the Division of State Police, Homes and Community Renewal, and graduate students employed by the State University.

There are no layoffs anticipated in this year's budget, and the budget anticipates investing in human capital by creating new positions in a number of agencies to support expanded agency obligations, foster economic development, improve the safety of individuals in the care of the State and enhance public safety.

Once again, this year, we will build on the gains we made last year and continue to increase the capacity and skills of the state workforce to deliver the highest quality services to the public. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you.