



**Department of
Civil Service**

**Testimony of the
Department of Civil Service**

**Before the Joint Hearing of the
Legislative Fiscal Committees**

March 1, 2023

Good Afternoon, Chairs Krueger and Weinstein, and distinguished members of the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committees. My name is Timothy Hogues and it is my privilege to serve as the Commissioner for the Department of Civil Service and President of the Civil Service Commission. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to comment on Governor Hochul's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2024, as well as to highlight some of our key accomplishments over the past year.

During my short tenure as Commissioner, I have been struck by the dedication and unwavering commitment of New York State's public workforce. State workers provide critical functions from transportation to public safety to healthcare that make the Empire State a great place to live, work, and play. New York State's public sector workforce has proven its dedication time and time again and is always on the front lines throughout public emergencies whether it be the COVID-19 pandemic or storm preparations and recovery. However, New York's workforce, over recent years, has experienced a reduction in size, which has been especially evident in lower level, direct-care, and healthcare positions.

This year, I am pleased to report that the Governor's proposed budget will continue to provide Health Care and Mental Hygiene Worker Bonuses to incentivize and reward direct-care, frontline state employees through FY 2024 and provide critical investments to reinforce careers and public services across several agencies as part of her larger efforts to rebuild the State's workforce.

The Department is also implementing a Hiring for Emergency Limited Placement (HELP) Program to address the statewide workforce shortage in critical health and safety titles. The HELP Program will temporarily waive the civil service exam requirement for approximately 100 direct care, health and safety titles across State government for a 12-month period and address emergency staffing situations by allowing agencies to more swiftly hire candidates that meet the minimum qualifications for those positions. In addition, after hearing concerns raised by the New York State Association of Counties and the New York Conference of Mayors, the Department is also implementing a similar program, the Local HELP Program, to allow local civil service agencies to address the emergency staffing crisis that they are also facing across health and safety positions.

The Department also recently transitioned some of our largest and most popular civil service examinations to an online format, allowing individuals to complete the exams wherever they have access to a computer. These exams were also open over multiple weeks, increasing accessibility to interested candidates. Utilizing this format, the Department tested nearly 30,000 candidates for nearly 200 job types in 2022.

Not only is the Department making large scale examinations more accessible and convenient for jobseekers, we are also doing more than ever to promote these exams widely to ensure that we reach a diverse audience. In 2022, the Department launched a robust outreach and recruitment initiative to increase information and resources to ensure job seekers have everything they need to pursue career opportunities in New York State, including hosting our first ever Professional Career Opportunities Virtual Career Fair,

which was attended by more than 3,000 jobseekers. In addition, we are working with an array of community-based partners and institutions of higher education to share timely examination information with their respective audiences.

Further, the Department continues to engage with agency partners to implement pay increases and salary differentials for a variety of titles to improve recruitment and retention efforts. As part of these efforts, the Department completed a major restructuring of nursing titles last year that resulted in upgrades for most titles and higher starting salaries and salary differentials.

Top of mind for all of the efforts the Department undertakes is ensuring that diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunity are at the forefront of all statewide initiatives. Under Governor Hochul's guidance and leadership, and in partnership with the State's Chief Diversity Officer, Chief Disability Officer, and each individual State agency, the Department is committed to building and sustaining a workforce and advancing programs and services that reflect the many unique faces, voices, backgrounds and ideas of those we serve.

Throughout 2022, the Department led statewide efforts to update demographic data collection forms to expand self-identification options related to gender (including adding an "X" gender marker), ethnicity, race, language, LGBTQ+, disability, and veteran status to increase visibility for historically underrepresented populations. These efforts lay the foundation to improve state workforce demographic tracking and reporting capabilities, and will inform initiatives – including outreach and recruitment strategies – for decades to come.

While we have made tremendous progress in 2022, I am extremely optimistic about the progress we will make in years ahead with Governor Hochul's ambitious vision to reimagine and modernize the Department of Civil Service. The Governor's Executive Budget supports a new progressive and transformative civil service examination model that includes administering continuous recruitment examinations at state operated computer-based testing centers. This model will allow the Department to meet the increasing demand for examination services by expanding our capacity to hold more examinations, and provide examination results to both state agencies and local civil service entities in a significantly compressed timeframe. The Executive Budget will also allow the Department to establish a greater presence at DOL Career Centers and meet jobseekers where they are, fund a public awareness campaign to extol the values of public service, and support a comprehensive study to modernize the civil service pay structure.

In addition to all that I have already highlighted, the Department continues to implement effective strategies to responsibly administer the New York State Health Insurance Program to more than 1.2 million members, ensuring access to high quality providers and services. In 2022, New York State and CSEA came to a five-year contract agreement, which included health benefit changes taking effect this July that will save the State, local governments, public authorities, and enrollees over \$300 million annually.

As you can see, the initiatives highlighted today reflect the Department's commitment and focus to eliminating barriers to entry for civil service jobs, meeting jobseekers where they are, and modernizing the State's approach to meeting our workforce needs.

The Department's vision for the future is progressive and inclusive, and I look forward to working in partnership with all of you to bring this vision to fruition.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to address any questions you may have at this time.