



**Department of
Civil Service**



FEBRUARY 26, 2025

Testimony of the New York State Department of Civil Service

Before the Joint Hearing of the Legislative Fiscal Committees

Good morning, Chairs Krueger, Pretlow, Jackson, Amato, Ramos, and Bronson, as well as distinguished members of your respective committees.

My name is Timothy Hogue and I am pleased 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 2026, and to highlight all we are doing to build tomorrow's workforce today.

Since she has taken office, Governor Hochul has made it a top priority to rebuild the New York State workforce to reflect the people that we serve, and over the past year, Team Civil Service has been focused on achieving this goal.

An impactful strategy that we implemented is the NY HELPS program, which launched in 2023 and was expanded in 2024. This program, which temporarily waives the entrance exam for nearly all jobs open to the public, has resulted in nearly 24,000 appointments at the state level and nearly 6,000 appointments at local government agencies.

I want to underscore that NY HELPS has been a huge success in allowing state agencies and municipal governments to hire new employees more efficiently. And that is why we recently sought approval from the Civil Service Commission to extend NY HELPS for an additional year through June of 2026 as we continue our merit system hiring transformation.

The message has been simple and clear: "It is easier than ever to get a job with New York State, and now is the time to apply."

To amplify this message, we implemented a highly successful marketing campaign — in English and Spanish — to promote the virtues, benefits, and diverse opportunities available as a New York State public servant. Building on this success, Governor Hochul is proposing continued funding to allow for additional campaigns in the future.

As part of our campaign, we are promoting the great benefits available to public employees. Through the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP), we are proud to ensure that its over 1.2 million members have access to high quality providers and services. We are pleased to report that there was a zero percent increase for enrollees of The Empire Plan for 2025 and this was due to the Department's rebid of its Pharmacy Benefit Manager contract, which was awarded to incumbent CVS Health. The new five-year agreement is estimated to save more than \$600 million annually.

In 2024, we also launched new Centers for Careers in Government. We announced the opening of the first center here in the Capital Region in September, and since then all 10 centers have opened in regions across the state. Civil Service staff at these centers collaborate with our partners at the Department of Labor to provide comprehensive support to assist jobseekers.

And we're not done yet. 2025 is sure to be another pivotal year. For years, we've heard concerns that exams are offered too infrequently and at inconvenient weekend times.

Enter our new computer-based testing centers. We anticipate opening nine centers by the end of this calendar year, and all 12 testing centers will be open by the end of 2026. Coupled with waiving civil service exams fees through June 2026, these centers will boost access to exams in regions all across the Empire State.

The law enforcement field is one that will greatly benefit from the new testing centers. Ensuring that New York's communities are safe is a top priority for Governor Hochul, and she has proposed several legislative and administrative actions aimed directly at bolstering the ranks of public safety officials.

Further, we realize that not everyone goes to college, and our stakeholders asked us to consider the value of candidates' backgrounds. So, we are currently updating the minimum qualifications for titles to allow experience to substitute for college degrees, where appropriate.

In addition, we boosted pay for licensed engineers and other similar titles requiring licensing, as well as for professional traineeships and fellowships.

More broadly, the Department is undertaking a comprehensive study to modernize the civil service pay structure, which dates to the 1950s. This study is being conducted to review cash and non-cash compensation and benefits and recommend strategies to ensure they are competitive with both public and private employers.

We have also released a request for proposal for a new job evaluation solution to allow the Department to value jobs accurately and consistently, and affirm pay equity for jobs across diverse occupations.

Finally, the Department is currently undertaking a comprehensive strategic planning effort to engage a variety of stakeholders and develop the future vision for the civil service merit system. This transformation will focus on customer service, sustainability, and onboarding best practices aimed at recruiting the next generation of public employees and leaders.

As part of this effort, the Department will leverage technology to develop a customer-friendly, fully accessible, innovative jobs portal and applicant management system. The new system will ensure we build a workforce that mirrors the diversity and ability of all New Yorkers.

The ultimate goal is to develop new automated processes to improve the experiences of both candidates and HR professionals and orient hiring practices toward matching the most qualified candidates with open positions quickly, efficiently, and equitably!

Our work, under Governor Hochul's leadership, contributes to the noble and basic philosophy that public servants should earn a solid, decent wage, which in itself helps lift up and support the middle class.

I would be remiss if I did not give a proper shout-out to Team Civil Service. None of this would be possible without the dedicated employees of our Department. They're willing to listen, and they're eager to implement changes so that Civil Service can better support the future success of our customers.

And I'd also like to thank you, our partners in the Legislature. Your investments allow us to be forward-thinking and innovative in our solutions, while being responsive to the needs and concerns of our customers. With your support and partnership, we will continue to remove barriers and improve the process to bring in — and retain — the best and the brightest for New York State Government. Thank you.