



**Department of
Civil Service**



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2026

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.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on Governor Hochul's Budget for Fiscal Year 2027 as it relates to the Department of Civil Service, and to highlight all we are doing to build tomorrow's workforce today and contribute to bolstering affordability in the Empire State.

Under Governor Hochul's leadership, and with your support, we are keeping the momentum going to modernize a civil service system that has its roots dating back to the 19th century.

In today's environment, it is truly a matter of affordability: Jobseekers simply cannot wait for months or years for a job that will put food on the table and provide for their families.

Changing times demand that, we too, change — and we are doing just that.

This shift began with the after-effects of the global pandemic.

State and local government agencies, particularly those involved in serving our most vulnerable populations, had difficulty recruiting and retaining employees.

What followed was the implementation of the New York Hiring for Emergency Limited Placement Statewide program, or NY HELPS. The result, to date, has been more than 52,000 appointments across both state and local government — to put this into perspective, it's roughly the equivalent of the City of Troy.

NY HELPS has been a game-changer by removing barriers to entry and streamlining the hiring process for the state and local government workforce. Now ... I don't mean to babble on, but from Buffalo to Babylon, we've found that NY HELPS has boosted state and local agencies' ability to hire workers from a broad and diverse applicant pool.

Notably, this program has been a contributor to Governor Hochul's laser-focused mission to make New York a more affordable place where all families can thrive by providing a pathway to stable middle-class careers.

Furthermore, we deployed marketing campaigns to promote the many opportunities across New York State. Our messaging reached millions of New Yorkers, with a focus on underserved communities. We also partnered with New York's first Chief Disability Officer to deliver a campaign that highlighted opportunities for New Yorkers with disabilities.

One of the benefits we continue to promote is NYSHIP, which provides more than 1.2 million members access to high quality services and providers. Through the Empire Plan, members who live throughout the United States and beyond have access to a robust network of providers across the country, international hospital coverage, and a comprehensive prescription drug plan.

I am also proud of the Department's efforts to open new Centers for Careers in Government (CCG) in regions around the state to reach thousands of jobseekers within their communities. Our CCG specialists are embedded in DOL career centers and serve as a liaison and resource for jobseekers and community groups at the neighborhood level.

It was our goal to meet more people where they are. And that's just what we did. To date, our CCGs have connected with more than 300,000 New Yorkers. Our engagement has made the pathway to a career in public service real to so many people.

In addition, just last fall, the Department updated qualifications for approximately 800 titles to allow for consideration of equivalent experience as an alternative to college degrees. By helping candidates from hitting their heads on the proverbial "paper ceiling," we are joining a welcome trend among employers to recognize the value of their skills and talents.

To continue to assist state agencies and local governments in recruiting the best and brightest talent, the Department is leveraging the success of NY HELPS to completely transform the civil service merit system.

This transformation envisions a customer-friendly, fully accessible, innovative method to examine for merit and fitness as written in the State Constitution. It will help us recruit and retain a workforce that continues to deliver for New Yorkers, while meeting the expectations of today's candidates in the competitive job market.

To that end, we are making meaningful progress to implement a new Jobs Portal and Applicant Management System. Under this new system, most state and local candidates will take an online training and experience (T&E) exam to evaluate their abilities for a specific job. A T&E exam is a proven testing method already being used for a broad range of some of our most high-demand titles, such as nurses and social workers. It will allow agencies to hire qualified, diverse candidates without the delays inherent in the traditional civil service process.

The other component of our transformation is focused on retention. I am pleased to share that we are beginning to open new Computer-Based Testing Centers this year to broaden convenience for existing state employees to take promotion exams. We are already holding exams at several regional centers.

We are committed to ensuring that the civil service merit system best meets the needs of all New Yorkers. We are communicating with our stakeholders to ensure transparency and obtain their feedback into the future state. We have been hitting the road to hear directly from our partners in the local civil service communities to solicit feedback and discuss next steps. As I always say, my door is open.

In conclusion, change is challenging. But transformation is necessary.

This transformation — and all of our efforts — only occurs through the talents and dedication of the hard-working employees of Team Civil Service. I thank them for their commitment to improving the lives of New Yorkers.

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.

That idea — and the services that public employees provide — all help in making New York an affordable and safe place to live and raise a family.

I thank you for your continued support and welcome any questions you have at this time.

Thank you.