

**Testimony of the Department of Civil Service
Before the Joint Hearing of the Legislative Fiscal Committees
February 4, 2019**

Good afternoon Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, and distinguished members of the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committees - my name is Lola Brabham - and it is my privilege to serve as the Acting Commissioner for the Department of Civil Service. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to comment on Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2020 - as it relates to the Department of Civil Service, and to share some of the Department's key accomplishments over the past year.

As the central personnel arm for New York State, the Department is charged with providing critical HR services and support to State agencies, helping them meet their strategic workforce needs and carry out their respective missions. In 2018, the Department made significant progress to improve our programs and services – including modernizing our approach to testing, strengthening diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and implementing workforce development strategies to hire and retain the best and brightest to work for the State of New York.

In 2018, the Department worked closely with the Office of Information Technology Services on a joint initiative to modernize the state's approach to test delivery and enable greater use of computerized testing. By summer 2019, civil service exams will be created and scored in a new system, which will reduce the amount of time it takes to build and score tests and ensure that the Department can be more responsive to the hiring needs of State agencies and local governments.

The Department recently launched the Civil Service Institute - a new training program for State and local HR professionals that covers all aspects of civil service administration. The Institute will ensure that all HR professionals have a solid

understanding of civil service administration, so that we improve the consistency and quality of HR management across New York State.

At the same time, new training opportunities are being offered to State employees via the Institute to enhance their knowledge and awareness of career mobility opportunities. By engaging employees at all levels, the Department is providing both State and local agencies with yet another tool for workforce development.

In response to legislation signed by Governor Cuomo, the Department has undertaken efforts to analyze data and develop a comprehensive report detailing flexible and alternative work schedules currently in place at State agencies. This report builds upon Governor Cuomo's ongoing legacy of pursuing equality and flexibility in the workplace and complements the Department's efforts to improve work-life balance for all State employees.

Under Governor Cuomo's leadership, the Department is strengthening diversity and equal opportunity across State government. In August 2018, Governor Cuomo signed Executive Order 187, which established the Office of Diversity Management within the Department to support statewide diversity and inclusion practices, policies, and programs throughout State agencies.

Further, the Executive Order created a new Executive Committee for Diversity and Inclusion to advise the Governor, the Chief Diversity Officer, and the Commissioner of Civil Service, in overseeing the effective implementation of these initiatives. These actions complement a series of initiatives already underway – from expanding testing venues to the establishment of new diversity and inclusion training – to cultivate a more inclusive work environment for all employees.

To ensure that State agencies adhere to consistent workforce management practices and collaborate to establish an HR community of practice, an Agency Deputy for Administration Policy Team (or ADAPT) was recently established. Deputy Commissioners for Administration across state government are now participating in HR program and policy meetings co-lead by the Department and the New York State Personnel Council to share best practices on topics including workforce development, succession planning, telecommuting, and the statewide mentoring program, among others.

To attract new talent to the State's workforce, the Department is pleased to offer the Professional Career Opportunities exam in early 2019. By providing a single mechanism for college graduates to compete for over 100 entry-level professional positions across State government, the PCO exam ensures that agencies have a diverse and qualified pipeline of talent available to meet their hiring needs.

In the health benefits arena, the Department is focused on efficiently administering the New York State Health Insurance Program through seven discrete employee benefit programs available under statute or through collective bargaining. The Department remains committed to providing affordable health care to over 1.2 million state and local government employees, retirees, and their families enrolled in NYSHIP, while protecting taxpayers through cost-effective management.

We also continue to collaborate with the Governor's Office of Employee Relations, the Worker's Compensation Board, and other partner agencies, to deliver the nation's strongest and most comprehensive Paid Family Leave policy to our Management/Confidential employees. We look forward to expanding this benefit to other State employees in 2019, as state employee unions ratify agreements to provide the Paid Family Leave benefit to their members.

As you can see, the Department is improving workforce efficiencies, planning strategically for the future, and collaborating with our partner agencies to improve services for all New Yorkers. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.