



**SB 984, An Act Accelerating the State Hiring Process**

**Testimony of the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and  
the Office of Policy and Management (OPM)  
Committee on Labor and Public Employees**

**March 2, 2023**

Good morning, Senator Kushner, Representative Sanchez, Senator Sampson, Representative Ackert, and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Michelle Gilman, and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services (“DAS”). I am joined today by Dave Krayeski, Undersecretary for Labor Relations at the Office of Policy and Management and Nicholas Hermes, Deputy Commissioner and Chief Human Resource Officer. We jointly thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to **support Governor’s Proposal, SB 984, *An Act Accelerating the State Hiring Process***.

**BACKGROUND**

Within state service, recruitment of state employees has been a challenge for several reasons: a competitive economy, the aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and a shrinking workforce nationally. In addition, the State of Connecticut faces challenges in hiring not experienced in the private sector. The state hiring process can be lengthy and cumbersome, often resulting in applicants withdrawing from consideration if they have received an offer from the more nimble private sector. The Governor’s proposal creates a solution that benefits our state employees, agencies and residents who depend on government services. We recognize and agree with the fact that state statute, through the State Personnel Act, outlines several safeguards to protect public services and ensure that our state workforce reflects the diversity of the state. This bill pertains to reorganizing and simplifying this process, so that we can be more competitive and still maintain high standards in hiring.

It is important to note that this legislative proposal is one important component in addressing our workforce challenges, specifically where we have identified statutory barriers. Over this past year, DAS, OPM and our executive branch agencies, in collaboration with our labor and legislative partners, have been working tirelessly to implement operational and administrative improvements to our recruitment practices. As examples, some of these initiatives include:

- Competitive wage offerings due to SEBAC/bargaining contract approval last year.
- Aggressive efforts to expand pipeline and apprenticeship opportunities with our higher education institutions, the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System, the State Department of Labor, Office of Workforce Strategy and other workforce partners.
- Strengthening opportunities for our non-bargaining managers via DAS, OPM and the Management Advisory Council.
- Expansion of the DAS strategic recruitment team to support our health care agency partners, and
- Learning and development training offerings for executive branch employees, to include networking, marketing, and specialized programs in how to manage and drive the vacancy process.
- A multi-media health care recruitment campaign launched in the fall has been incredibly successful with increased job board traffic and filed applications for critical direct care jobs.
- A process improvement initiative led by DAS in partnership with executive branch agencies to review administrative hiring procedures.

Last year, DAS submitted a bill to make minor, but meaningful, changes to the State Personnel Act to conform the provisions of the Act with current practice. This year, SB 984 adds to that proposal to provide more flexibility to appointing authorities within the hiring process. This language will more accurately describe current practices used by the State Executive Branch while also enabling continued innovation.

## **BILL SUMMARY**

Governor Lamont's proposal reduces statutorily mandated timelines and increases flexibility and decision-making capability for appointing authorities. These proposals are aimed at reducing the amount of time it takes to fill a vacant position and to otherwise strengthen the process.

Specifically, this legislation:

- **Permits appointing authorities to immediately hire someone from any candidate list.** Under current law, after an agency identifies a candidate that they would like to hire, there are still several steps that must be taken before a job offer can be made. This proposal allows an offer to be made immediately after the desired candidate is identified and permits those additional steps to be taken during the candidates six-month Working Test Period instead.
- **Enables appointing authorities to hire an employee from any candidate list to fill a vacancy in a different job class,** provided they meet the requirements of that position. For example, an agency can offer a Civil Engineer job to an individual who participated in a Design Engineer recruitment without having to repost the position.

- **Permits job openings to be posted on a continuous basis.** Under current law, continuous recruitments are not possible because there is outdated language in statute that refers to “examinations” and “candidate scores” – terms that are no longer applicable to how the state recruits and makes hires. This proposal removes this language to clarify that a recruitment may occur on a continuous basis. This simple change will ensure that candidate lists have sufficient applicants for agencies to consider when they are looking to hire.
- **Enables appointing authorities to begin screening applications sooner.** Under current law, candidate lists are established by DAS for review and use by agencies to select and hire employees. To facilitate the selection and hiring process, this proposal enables an agency to begin reviewing applicants as soon as the job is posted rather than waiting for the recruitment to close and for DAS to screen all applicants who apply.
- **Strengthens language regarding the hiring process for veterans and their spouses.** Under current law, “examination points” are awarded to veterans and their spouses. However, these “points” are no longer meaningful because examination scores are no longer utilized. This proposal removes the reference to “points,” and instead, requires agencies to consider the candidacy of veteran applicants and their spouses for there to be a meaningful benefit.
- **Increases the length of time for an emergency from 2 to 6 months.** Under current law emergency hires may occur for 2 months. The Covid-19 pandemic has taught us that emergencies can last much longer than 2 months. In recognition of this new reality, this proposal increases the time an emergency hire may occur to 6 months.
- **Simplifies transfer language that is also in collective bargaining agreements.** The rules surrounding transfer from one state agency to another currently reside both in statute and in collective bargaining agreements. This proposal eliminates the transfer rules in statute to simplify administration around transfers and refers to collective bargaining agreement requirements when applicable. The elimination of these duplicative processes simplifies the vacancy filling process, thereby making it faster.

## CONCLUSION

Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. We look forward to working with the Committee to address these issues, and urge support of **SB 984**, *An Act Accelerating the State Hiring Process*.