



April 10, 2024

The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese
Chairman, House Committee on Labor
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

Re: House Bill No. 8096 – An Act Relating To Public Officers And Employees -- Merit System -- Personnel Administration

Dear Chairman Corvese,

Thank you for providing the Executive Office of Health & Human Services (EOHHS), Department of Administration (DOA), Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), and Department of Human Services (DHS) the opportunity to submit comments in support of House Bill No. 8096, which proposes amendments to personnel administration law.

As members of the Special Legislative Commission to Study and Provide Recommendations for Changes to the Merit System for Personnel Administration and Personnel Management in the Department of Human Services and the Department of Children, Youth and Families, we have had the opportunity to engage in productive dialogue regarding the State's hiring process and civil service examinations over the course of many months. In addition to continuing to review internal protocols, several of the recommendations stemming from this Commission are included in the content of this bill.

This legislation aims to:

- Shorten the maximum expiration date for employment lists – also known as “open competitive lists” – to two years;
- Reduce the time it takes to appoint eligible external candidates by rank to vacancies fulfilled through the civil service exam process;
- Require the State to hold a quarterly civil service exam for the purpose of filling social worker positions at DHS; and
- Extend the DCYF civil service exam program pilot to March 15, 2026 (the pilot is currently slated to end on Sept. 30, 2024).

In this hiring environment, it is more important than ever for the State to have the flexibility and the ability to pivot in the hiring process. House Bill 8096 will continue to protect the integrity of

our programs through thoughtful legislative changes that enable the Division of Human Resources and state agencies to fulfill their missions effectively and efficiently.

We would like to thank the Commission members – especially Chairwoman Patricia Serpa and Representatives Deborah Fellela and Sherry Roberts – for including us in these important discussions and engaging stakeholders to discuss updates to the Merit system.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our support of this legislation with the Committee. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact our offices at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Merolla-Brito
Director, Department of Human Services



Brenna McCabe
Deputy Director, Department of Administration



Michael Cronan
Director of Legislative & Constituent Affairs, Executive Office of Health & Human Services

Colleen Walters Digitally signed by
Lisa Nelson with permission.

Colleen Walters
Interdepartmental Project Manager, Department of Children, Youth and Families

cc: The Honorable Representative Patricia A. Serpa
 The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Labor
 James DeCastro, Clerk
 Nicole McCarty, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House