

Dear Legislator:

As a constituent and a state employee in the Office of Information Technology Services (OITS) represented by the Public Employees Federation (PEF), I am generally pleased with Governor Hochul's proposed budget for OITS. However, there are several areas where improvements can be made.

Under the Governor's proposal, OITS' staff would increase by 248 positions (from 3,321 to 3,569). However, OITS still has the 5th most consultants of all Executive-controlled state agencies with 442 full-time equivalents. With consultant spending at OITS exceeding \$76 million, this averages out to over \$172,000 annually per consultant. The use of costly outside consultants will only increase if changes are not made to the way New York meets its IT demands. A cost/benefit analysis should be mandated to ensure that any work done by consultants could not be done at the same or lower cost by state employees. Legislation to accomplish this (S.5356/A.8159) should be included in the final budget agreement.

Staff training at OITS continues to be a problem. There is an appropriation proposal (A.9000/S.8000 p. 420) to spend \$2 million at OITS towards achieving specific certifications that are not currently held by employees in sufficient quantity to meet the state's needs. We must ensure that this money is actually spent on staff development and increased to \$5 million to help meet the state's IT needs with qualified, state-employed professionals. This program should also be expanded to cover online and onsite training for staff to acquire different skill sets. Additionally, the state needs to require all IT system vendors to provide staff training on all newly purchased hardware and software so that staff can operate the systems and troubleshoot problems as needed.

Additionally, the Governor has also proposed to create a "Digital Swat Team" and other fellowship programs which circumvent the Civil Service process, including the merit and fitness examinations. PEF also opposes the Governor's proposal to the state's Civil Service Law to allow continuous recruitment testing (S.8005/A.9005 Part R) and the proposal to eliminate the requirement that promotional exams and open competitive exams be held simultaneously (S.8005/A.9005 Part S), as each of these proposals severely weaken the merit and fitness system established under the Civil Service Law.

Instead of these programs, we need the management team at OITS to promote qualified candidates currently waiting for promotional opportunities. I also encourage you to support the Governor's proposals to expand testing sites at SUNY, CUNY and the community colleges so we can attract the best and brightest to state employment.

As my elected representative, I kindly ask that you work with the leadership in your house to limit consultants, pass cost/benefit legislation, increase funding for training and expand the applicant pool through the proper civil service processes. Thank you for your time, attention and consideration of these very important issues.

Sincerely,
