



Office of Information Technology Services (OITS) in the State Budget

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 15 positions to 3,608. The agency would also receive additional funding in the amount of \$49 million to pay for cybersecurity and an e-procurement system.

However, OITS is still very dependent on consultants to meet their needs with 450 full-time equivalents (FTEs). Consultant spending at OITS exceeding \$77 million, this averages out to nearly \$172,000 annually per consultant. These numbers will only increase if changes are not made to the way New York meets its IT demands.

Also, there is an appropriation proposal (A.3000/S.4000 p. 436) to spend \$1.7 million at OITS towards achieving specific certifications that are not currently held by employees in sufficient quantity to meet the state's needs. This funding is a reduction of \$300,000 from previous years. The funding needs to be restored to previous years' level and properly spent to help meet the state's IT needs with qualified, state-employed professionals. This program could also be expanded to reimburse tuition for state employees who are continuing their education on their own.

I am concerned with the potential of over-reliance on artificial intelligence (AI) by the state. We should develop a policy for the development of a digitization and artificial intelligence environment where the ultimate responsibility and accountability for the data lies with humans, not with the technology itself. It should be grounded in ethical values, principles and human rights. State employees should be involved in any algorithm design, procurement, training, implementation and assessment.

As my elected representative, I kindly ask that you work with the leadership in your house to limit consultants, increase funding for training and create a smart policy for the use of artificial intelligence (AI). Thank you for your time, attention and consideration of these very important issues.

Sincerely,
