

October 13, 2023

Dear Senate Standing Committee on Civil Service and Pensions,

This testimony is provided on behalf of the Ramapo Catskill Library System (RCLS) which serves Sullivan, Orange, Rockland, and lower Ulster counties. The Ramapo Catskill Library System supports the testimony provided by Max Prime, Government Relations and Advocacy at New York Library Association, on October 11, 2023 during the Senate Standing Committee on Civil Service and Pensions meeting. In a more localized lens, we would like to provide exact context by which the current regulations of Civil Service create a hardship by which our profession is unable to not only grow but also meet the needs of the communities.

As Mr. Prime stated in his testimony, "In New York, employees of municipal, school district, and special district public libraries, as well as public academic and school libraries, are public employees subject to Civil Service law. Expressed quantitatively, that means **388 of New York's 755 public libraries, over 50%, are dependent on the efficiency and efficacy of state, county, and municipal Civil Service in their efforts to recruit new staff and retain existing hires**". At RCLS, many of the member libraries are subject to Civil Service. The difficulties by which the libraries are able to promote, retain, and recruit are rampant. One large library has experienced this recently and states the following:

Often times an experienced librarian or library worker, with years of service at the library, will be unable to move from a part-time position to a full-time position – or from a provisional position to a permanent position – merely because they did not score high enough on the civil service exam.

In the case of some general clerical titles, candidates with higher scores who must be selected from the civil service list may have no library or public-facing customer service experience. Long-time library staff must then be terminated in favor of a candidate with no track record of library work and skills that do not match the position. For librarians, it is much the same. For instance, if a position opens up for a Youth Services librarian but the highest scoring candidates from the civil service list have no experience working with children or young adults, they must still be considered before any other candidates, including staff with the necessary experience who have scored lower on the exam but proven themselves in the course of their careers as exemplary professionals.

More than once have staff been lost to other opportunities that do not require completion of the civil service exam. This is a continuous point of contention for

administration as they have not only lost the opportunity for this person to move into a full-time role, but now the part-time position must be filled and out the door goes institutional knowledge, experience, and expertise—all of which are necessary to support the community by which the library serves. In some cases, library employees have been working at the library for more than two years prior to the exam being available at which point, the employee loses the job due to a low score on a test.

It is due to these points that we are supportive of the following actions provided in Mr. Prime's testimony:

- 1. Continuous Recruitment** Building on the expanded permissibility of continuous recruitment outlined in Chapter 55, establishment of continuing eligible lists should be not only permitted where the Civil Service Department or a municipal commission finds it appropriate to do so but required where possible. In instances when continuous recruitment is not possible, exams should be offered no less frequently than every two years regardless of the status of existing lists.
- 2. Standard Grading Metrics** A public standard across all counties and municipalities should be established for Civil Service grading metrics. These metrics should be understandable and predictable in order to assist potential applicants to take multiple-choice exams as well as complete training and experience-based exams.
- 3. Modernize Exam Content from the Field** Individuals from a given profession should be provided with the opportunity to offer input on the content of experience and multiple-choice exams for titles specific to their industry.
- 4. Transitioning from Provisional to Permanent Appointment** If a test is not offered within nine months after an individual is provisionally appointed to a position, an employee's appointment should be made permanent. If an exam is offered within nine months, a person in the provision appointment should be scored as pass/fail on that exam.
- 5. Part-Time Positions** Part-time positions (i.e., less than 25 hours per week) should be non-competitive by operation of law instead of the local rule.
- 6. Expand Electronic Canvassing** Simplify the list canvassing process by allowing for across-the-board email and phone contact in lieu of mailing letters.
- 7. Expand the number of eligible employees for appointment to a Rule of 5** The Rule of 3 restricts the number of candidates that are eligible to be canvassed when public employers are seeking employees.

By making these changes, the libraries will prove to be stronger member of the economic ecosystem within their communities. We strive to address and meet the needs of our individual communities, but with barriers in place we are working harder, not smarter.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We are happy to address this further.

Sincerely,



Grace Riario
Executive Director



Jen Park
Government Relations Specialist