



# ACE

## ASSOCIATION OF CAREER EMPLOYEES

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September 23, 2019

Malika Evanco  
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Dear Administrator Evanco:

Since the Association of Career Employees was established in the mid-1970s, it has taken an active role in advancing the status of the civil service system protections of state employees from political or unethical influences that might seek to gain unwarranted favors. We have watched in dismay as the previous administration attacked those protections through the civil service “reform” enacted in 2016 and impugn the value of employees in general.

The Evers Administration has made several important efforts to regain the trust of, and respect for, state employees including Executive Order #2, the Governor’s personal visits to agencies and installing employee-oriented agency leadership. These changes have been very welcomed but need to be paired with active policy development in the face of very unfavorable provisions in law and administrative code. We suggest some of the targets for this attention as follows.

**Monitoring of terminations.**

We have found that the number of disciplinary terminations has trended higher over the first seven years of the previous administration. We attribute this to a lack of protection for civil service employees due to the end of effective union representation and changes to the non-union discipline process that puts employees at a further disadvantage.

Although structural remedies in law or rule aren’t likely at this point, we would like to see careful monitoring of disciplinary and job performance actions. Since few external protections are available to employees, it becomes an important Human Resources function to provide thorough and neutral review of supervisors’ actions against employees. This is not a role that traditional HR managers embraced in the past due to a reliance on unions’ duty to protect their members.

**Encouraging a flexible approach to employees’ difficulties by management.**

We also believe that it is possible to alleviate some of the new obstacles faced by employees through managers taking active roles in solving problems that previously would have been

moderated by employee-friendly regulations. For example, it was often to the advantage of agencies and employees to exchange employees via permissive transfers and promotions between agencies. Now it has become much riskier for employees to move between agencies because there is no longer an ability to reinstate back to an agency if an inter-agency move doesn't work out. Agency management should be much more sensitive to the obstructions faced by employees in these situations.

### **Protecting Merit-based Employee Selection.**

Another concern involves the changes in Civil Service Law that removed references to "examinations" and required the use of resumes. This has led to the use of unblinded resumes containing names, addresses and other items that reveal an applicant's identity. There is substantial research showing that resume reviews including applicant names produce substantial adverse impact and may lead to violations of the law (i.e., all selection procedures must still be validated according to professional standards).

A predictable consequence of the use of resumes as the sole selection tool is a large proportion of unqualified applicants. This places a great burden on the supervisors to interview more applicants and to weed out the unqualified ones. This practice may seem appropriate in a very tight labor market, but the numbers of applicants will increase dramatically and totally swamp the supervisors with unqualified applicants when the economy worsens.

### **The Need for Comprehensive Workforce Planning.**

We have noticed two trends that are very disturbing when considered together. The first is an increasing number of employees leaving state employment over time. This is evident from data provided by DPM in various reports and via open records requests. The second trend is the average number of applications per job announcement which was described in the Workforce Report by your office. These indicators show an imbalance between the availability of new employees and the rate of employees leaving which, if not addressed, will lead to a severe shortage of employees for the State.

To assess the risks and possible solutions will require a concentrated effort at workforce planning that must go far beyond the scattered approach of previous years.

### **Employee Compensation.**

Although the 2019-2021 budget provides funds for increases in pay, we have not seen any sign of a new compensation plan. We realize that this delay could be caused by entirely reasonable factors, but we hope that the plan is progressing and the following items will be addressed when the plan is released.

- The agencies should be allowed and encouraged to award base building DMCs.

Malika Evanco  
September 23, 2019  
Page 3

- Planned and future general wage adjustments should be sufficient to make up the substantial pay cuts suffered in the Walker years.
- Market, parity and equity adjustments should be used in such a manner that base pay is correlated to length of service.
- The State should have a general practice of paying a minimum of \$15 per hour.

We look forward to discussing these matters with you.

Sincerely.