



CITIZENS UNION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Testimony before the City Council Committee on Civil Service and Labor
City Hall – September 22, 2026

Municipal Recruitment and Civil Service Pathways

Good morning, members of the New York City Council Committee on Civil Service and Labor. My name is Amaury Dujardin, and I am the Public Policy Manager at Citizens Union. Citizens Union is a nonpartisan good government group that has worked for 130 years to ensure honest and accountable government, fair and open elections, and a civically engaged public.

Since the organization's founding, Citizens Union has championed reforms to improve the city's municipal workforce and make it fairer and more open, from setting merit-based public service to replace Tammany-based patronage to examining new ways to modernize the civil service system.¹

A recent report by The 5BORO Institute at Citizens Union on Solving the Staffing Crisis took a deep dive into what City Hall can do to retain and recruit top talent to fill the most critical vacancies, highlighting several strategies the City should consider. These included creative solutions like the Civil Service Ambassador, Pathways Fellowship, and Youth Apprenticeship programs. We applaud the City for such efforts, but overall recruitment efforts can go further.

Right now, taking a civil service exam, applying for that job, going through interviews, receiving an offer, and onboarding into the role often takes over a year, with some candidates even receiving offers two to three years after they applied.² This is not a sustainable recruitment strategy for a modern city. We must

¹ Grace Rauh, Stephanie Bazell, and Tasfia Nayem, *Solving the Staffing Crisis: Saving City Government for New Yorkers* (New York: 5BORO Institute, 2023), <https://fiveboro.nyc/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Solving-the-Staffing-Crisis.pdf>;

Church, Sarah, Lyz Crane, Cinthia Ruiz Garcia, Johanna Ryan, and Haley Zernich. *Tensions, Trends and Trade-Offs: Recommendations Towards an Equitable, Efficient, and Effective New York City Civil Service System*. Citizens Union, 2012. https://citizensunion.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/CU_CapstoneReport_CivilServiceReform.pdf;

Citizens Union, *Promoting Efficiency in Government: Proposals for a New Personnel System for the City of New York* (New York: Citizens Union, 1976), <https://citizensunion.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/CU-1976-Report-Personnel-Reform-in-NYC.pdf>.

² New York City Council, Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation, "Increased Timeline for Civil Service Exam Results and Hiring Process," meeting, New York, NY, March 21, 2025, video, 1:09, <https://citymeetings.nyc/meetings/new-york-city-council/2025-03-21-1000-am-committee-on-governmental-operations-state-federal-legislation/chapter/increased-timeline-for-civil-service-exam-results-and-hiring-process/>.

update our recruitment strategy in two ways: first, by speeding up the hiring timeline, and second, by making it easier to apply.

Speed Up the Hiring Timeline

By the time the City offers a job, many applicants have already found another role, or their career priorities have shifted. While the City can work with unions and the State to speed up recruitment, here are two recommendations the City can implement now. First, **adopt band scoring to replace the rule of three**. As we know, when the City is ready to hire for a role, it must find three candidates willing to be hired from a ranked list of those who passed the civil service exam for a title, and hiring managers must call through that list in ranked order. Calling through those lists, which can be years old and hundreds of names long, can take ages. Instead, New York City should adopt band scoring, ranking candidates into bands such as outstanding, well-qualified, and qualified, and allowing managers to choose candidates from the top tier based on fit rather than ranked order.³

Another option is for the City to **ask the State's Civil Service Commission to remove exam requirements for licensed roles** where state licensing processes already exist, like for engineers, commercial drivers, or nurses.⁴ Such an ask would not require state legislation, only approval from the Commission. Like many of the programs the Committee discussed earlier today, such a decision may not dramatically increase recruitment, but it is another way to help tackle the thousands of current vacancies.

Regardless of what we choose, the City should **start being transparent with candidates**.⁵ Publish expected timelines for exam results and from hire to start date. Find ways to provide other updates. The City's current silence deters candidates from continuing to engage, while such transparency would give candidates more assurance of their status in the hiring process.

Make Applying Easier

New York City also needs to simplify the application process and **establish plain-language standards across all communications**.⁶ Current language used for exam notices, websites, and forms is confusing, especially for someone who has not worked in city government. Right now, candidates have the easiest time applying if they have close friends or family who are civil servants, which creates a problem where only those with insider knowledge apply. Fixing this will bring in a broader range of candidates who are currently discouraged from applying when they first visit NYC's hiring website.

Additionally, the City should **redesign the civil service and jobs websites**.⁷ Build a tool that lets job seekers search for jobs they are eligible for under certain civil service titles by a candidate's education,

³ Caitlin Lewis, "NYC Has the Power to Fix Its Hiring Process — The Charter Commission Should Use It," Searchlight, June 23, 2026, <https://searchlight.citizensunion.org/nyc-has-the-power-to-fix-its-hiring-process-the-charter-commission-should-use-it/>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Rebecca Heywood, "What It Will Take to Deliver for New Yorkers: Modernize the Civil Service and Hiring Process," #PublicSectorJobBoard (Substack), November 11, 2025, <https://publicsectorjobboard.substack.com/p/what-it-will-take-to-deliver-for>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

experience, and field of work. Right now, it is hard for candidates to know which titles they qualify for, only exacerbating the insider-knowledge problem we mentioned. Apply user experience design principles to both NYC Jobs and OASys so finding jobs and navigating exam requirements is easier.

These are all ideas the City can take now, and we have more if anyone wants to discuss them further, including ways to engage the State or unions in broader civil service reforms.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to try to answer any questions.