



TO: Members of the Senate State Government Committee
FROM: Lisa Schaefer, Director of Government Relations
DATE: April 16, 2018
RE: **CCAP Supports Senate Bill 1037**

On behalf of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP), representing all 67 counties, I write today to share our support for Senate Bill 1037. This legislation would move several responsibilities of the State Civil Service Commission to the Office of Administration with the intent of providing better customer service for those who use the civil service system while assuring adherence to fair and impartial hiring procedures.

CCAP worked with the General Assembly to assure the passage of Act 69 and Act 167 of 2016 as a result of the need for counties to employ qualified, competent staff to fill key human services positions in county government. In seeking amendments to the Civil Service Act, counties were also driven by both historical difficulties in filling positions as a result of Civil Service Act provisions and practices by the Civil Service Commission, as well as recent new mandates that have increased vacancies and resulted in increased turnover in positions that assure the health and safety of our residents.

The process for hiring through the Civil Service Act has driven more than 20 counties to seek an alternative local merit hire process over the past ten years, with more considering options outside of civil service. To use its own merit-based system, a county must develop a plan based around six components designed to provide the same protections as under the state's system. This plan requires approval from all funding agencies related to the impacted positions and the Civil Service Commission.

To that end, some counties have indicated that they would be interested in exploring a transition to their own system, citing the challenges with delays in filling positions under the state system, the lack of flexibility in the hiring process and the need for a larger pool of candidates, but lack the expertise or resources to do so. Further, some counties that have transitioned to their own merit-based system still use the Civil Service Commission to hire for some of its positions, and therefore have not been able to wholly remove themselves from the same frustrations.

Although Act 69 and Act 167 were legislated to provide relief, to date, the Civil Service Commission has not implemented the provisions of the acts. Although regulations were proposed in 2017, CCAP believes the proposed regulations were inconsistent with the legislative

intent of these acts in several areas, including disagreements over the interpretation of language allowing for alternatives to the Rule of Three and permitting vacancy-based hiring.

In the meantime, counties struggle to find qualified and competent staff to serve the needs of abused and neglected children, disabled adults, and the elderly – all very vulnerable populations whose interests should come first and foremost as counties look to hire qualified individuals to provide these services. For that reason, CCAP supports Senate Bill 1037 as a means of modernizing the civil service system and making it more customer-service oriented, both for employers and job seekers. The bill would transfer all current responsibilities of the State Civil Service Commission related to merit-based hiring, civil service applications, certifications, examinations and promotions to the Office of Administration. The Commission would retain its current duties related to appeals from employment decisions.

To be clear, the bill does not affect the criteria for hiring under the civil service system nor the positions that are subject to civil service hiring. In addition, the bill does NOT change any existing criteria related to veterans' preference.

Counties have experienced many years of frustration with the system, which discourages employment by creating difficulties for interested candidates who will find positions elsewhere, rather than subject themselves to antiquated processes that most employers have long abandoned. Under current conditions, counties cannot compete for the best and most qualified staff, nor assure the best, most effective and efficient provision of key services, and CCAP stands ready to work in partnership with the commonwealth to work toward a civil service system that takes into account the needs of counties to assure competent qualified staff are available to serve critical government roles.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these comments with the committee.