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**Testimony in support of:**

***SB 414: An Act Concerning Equity in State Employment***

Senator Kushner, Representative Sanchez, Senator Cabrera, Representative Wilson and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 414, An Act Concerning Equity in State Employment. This bill recognizes the findings and recommendations that the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) has made in collaboration with the University of Connecticut's School of Public Policy (UConn SPP).

As elected officials, we love to advocate laws that claim to champion a diverse and equitable workforce. But it really wasn't until a couple of years ago – and now again under my administration – that we at the Office of the State Comptroller decided it was time for Connecticut to do what it had failed to do before: Look in the mirror.

My office's joint research and report with UConn SPP, [\*The Future of Pay Equity and Representation in Connecticut's Executive Branch\*](#), found that Connecticut continues to successfully surpass many other public-sector employers across the country when it comes to women rising to the highest ranks of state government in key leadership roles. However, it also found that Connecticut state government, as an employer, continues to face persistent challenges when it comes to hiring women and/or minorities in certain types of occupations and ensuring equal compensation across gender and racial-ethnic categories. The greatest recruitment diversity challenges continue to persist in jobs involving protective services, engineering, science and construction.

This ongoing research, which we expect to report on this Spring, will also show that the state has recruited thousands of new employees in the wake of a 2022 retirement surge, but that representation and pay inequities continue to persist across this new cohort, despite expansive recruitment efforts. The OSC and UConn SPP are not alone in this work. I want to recognize the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) for their work, as well as the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health, which recently conducted a thorough report that must serve as a final self-awakening for all policymakers, [\*Dismantling Structural Racism Within Connecticut State Government\*](#). I would also like to acknowledge the great work done by my predecessor, Natalie Braswell, on this important initiative.

Regardless of best efforts and intentions by agency leaders struggling every day to meet their mission-critical needs, existing recruitment strategies are simply not working for certain agencies

and occupations. This legislation hopes to correct that by requiring agencies to hire employees dedicated to DEI initiatives, including analyzing, strategizing and implementing DEI recruitment strategies and other strategic DEI initiatives.

Every agency has unique challenges that demand unique, individualized DEI recruitment strategies. I commend your attention to this, and hope that you will consider additional measures, including:

1. Requiring that DEI directors report directly to agency leadership to ensure engagement and accountability at the highest level;
2. That strategic DEI plans be submitted to the legislature to ensure that this important work is not simply destined for shelves; and
3. A requirement that the state improve its employee data across state government for both executive and non-executive agencies (including higher education institutions) so that future analyses can be more meaningful.

We cannot build an equitable workforce if we're not willing to look clearly at our own data. I am fully committed to continuing this work within my own agency, as well as working collaboratively with our partner agencies across state government.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sean Scanlon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sean" being more prominent than the last name "Scanlon".

Sean Scanlon

State Comptroller