

**STATEMENT OF DEBORAH SILLS
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DELOITTE CONSULTING LLP
prepared for delivery before the
RHODE ISLAND HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
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Thank you Chairwoman Serpa and members of the House Oversight Committee for the opportunity to be with you today. We are here to underscore Deloitte's commitment to the State of Rhode Island and to the people you serve.

My name is Debbie Sills and I am the National Managing Principal for Deloitte Consulting's Public Sector practice. I am here with my colleague, Kenny Smith, a Deloitte Consulting Principal who leads our Integrated Eligibility practice nationally and is a member of the RI Bridges leadership team.

On behalf of Deloitte, we want to apologize to you and to the people of Rhode Island. We fully realize that our Public Sector work impacts the lives of individuals and families – often when they are most vulnerable. We are very sorry for the impact that our system issues have had on your constituents, on state workers, and on service providers.

While the technology is working much better than it was, we still have work to do. We know there are still some people having difficulty accessing benefits, processing cases, or receiving timely payments.

We are continuing to hold ourselves accountable and work closely with the State to prioritize and fix the outstanding technology and business process issues impacting field office staff throughout the state. We appreciate how dedicated these front-line workers are and how much they care about their clients. We know this has been a difficult time, and we want to thank them for their patience. We are committed to giving them the system they need to do their jobs efficiently and effectively.

We are an organization that not only stands behind our work, we step up. The agreements we have reached with the State and the investments we have made demonstrate our good faith and dedication to the long-term success of RI Bridges and our commitment to the people of Rhode Island.

We will not let up until we have made things right.

There is no question, large system implementations like this are difficult. The complexity of government programs and the technology that sustains them make it inevitable there will be challenges.

In the case of RI Bridges, those challenges were deeper and more difficult to solve than we anticipated. Why?

Simply put, the system is very complex.

RI Bridges is the only eligibility system in the country that integrates more than 10 state and federal health and human services programs and a state-based health insurance exchange.

As is often the case with large system implementations like this one, the client information we converted from the legacy systems was extensive, inconsistent, and up to 30 years old. The age of this data, the number of systems, and decades of state and federal policy changes made the conversion process difficult, particularly for the most complicated cases.

This is also the largest technology implementation the State of Rhode Island has ever undertaken.

As the State's comprehensive analysis last year made clear, Deloitte and the State needed "more time, more people, and more training" before RI Bridges was launched in September 2016.

If we knew the complexity of the issues we would face – with people, process and technology – we would not have gone live with all programs on the same day.

Over the past year and a half, we have focused on fixing the things that most impact your constituents. And we have made steady, meaningful progress.

We have significantly reduced the number of issues blocking benefits, improved data integrity, and collaborated with the State to better align our technology with their business processes.

We have enhanced the system, improved its design, and added most of the functionality that was deferred before go-live.

At the same time, we have helped the State strengthen and expand its workforce.

We have provided robust training and on-site support to workers to help improve the accuracy of payments, accelerate eligibility determinations, and reduce the backlog of pending and overdue applications.

Late last year, we worked with the State to refine our approach to fixing system and business process issues so that we all stay focused on the most important objectives – benefit timeliness, eligibility accuracy, payment accuracy, client notifications, and compliance.

Now that the system is more stable, and the staff is more proficient, our progress is accelerating.

We are more quickly identifying and resolving system issues that are preventing eligible residents from receiving timely benefits; we call these 'benefit blockers.'

A few weeks ago, we completed a major system upgrade that delivered several key business impacts. These include enhanced data integrity, which will improve the accuracy of benefits; streamlined applications for SNAP and LTSS, which will improve the timeliness of determinations; and 34 previously deferred features that will improve the overall operation of the system.

For the month of March, SNAP benefits were issued on time to more than 94,000 households. More than 81% of *new* SNAP applications were also processed timely. The number of applications *not* processed timely currently represents about 1% of the SNAP population receiving benefits.

The State is continuing to drive improvements in SNAP timeliness and we have a rapid response team focused on resolving any issues that block the processing of applications. The number of overdue SNAP applications for which the State is responsible has been cut from 780 in November to less than 20 today.

The number of pending Medicaid applications is also going down. In the past six weeks, the State has significantly reduced this backlog.

To make it easier for your constituents to get the benefits they need, we have worked with the State to streamline the application form, cutting the number of pages down from a cumbersome 32 to just 8. This new version is currently awaiting Federal approval.

We have also stepped up to help the State strengthen its field operations and improve the timeliness and accuracy of case processing. We brought in a team to listen to the concerns of workers, analyze their procedures, and make recommendations based on leading practices from other states.

As part of this process:

- We are working with the State to prioritize improvements to workflow and operations, particularly those identified by field staff, to make it easier for workers to use the technology, including an upgraded Worker Inbox.

- We are expanding our critical training support to state staff and working to integrate policy, system and process training. Our instructor-led courses and voluntary learning labs provide hands-on activities for most career tracks – from customer service aides to supervisors – and targeted courses for workers in specific units.
- And, we are helping the State to implement a new solution that will improve the scanning and indexing of applications. This new technology, which is scheduled to go live in May, will improve accuracy, reduce errors and lost paperwork, and enable workers to process cases in less time than ever before.

For current Medicaid recipients, we have added new functionality to the system that has enabled over 31,000 households to be automatically renewed without the need for a worker to intervene or documents to be submitted.

And because we know that delayed child care and LTSS payments have caused particular hardship, we have prioritized resolving any system issues that delay these benefits. At the same time, the State is making significant progress reducing the backlog of applications for these programs.

In fact, the processing of applications across *all* programs is better than ever. The application backlog has also continued to come down and is at its lowest point since October, and the number of open incidents impacting benefits is at an all-time low.

While there is still work to be done, we are confident these metrics will continue to trend in a positive direction.

We know from our experience implementing large, complex projects like this one that they can only succeed when everyone is working together towards a common goal. And that's exactly what we are doing here. We would like to acknowledge and thank the State's leadership team for working side-by-side with us every day to prioritize and resolve the outstanding issues impacting the effectiveness of RI Bridges.

In closing, I want to reiterate how seriously the people of Deloitte take our commitment to the State of Rhode Island and to the families you represent. We will continue to hold ourselves accountable to deliver in full on that commitment.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be with you today and to update you on the progress we are making. Kenny and I are happy to answer your questions.

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