



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR DANIEL J. MCKEE

Governor McKee Testimony

Personnel Public Hearing

Presented by: Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Brian Daniels

Per tradition, I am here on behalf of the State Budget office to read into the record comments regarding Cabinet Director salaries. The following is testimony submitted by Governor McKee in advance of this hearing:

As Governor, I am committed to recruiting and retaining top talent for our agency leadership. We need to prioritize keeping knowledgeable, dedicated workers in the Ocean State, and that includes in the top tiers of state government where strong leadership is critical. There is a lot of important and pressing work being done in our agencies – from implementation of once-in-a-generation infrastructure projects to the life-saving work being done in health and human services.

In order to attract the best possible leaders for Rhode Island, we need to evaluate salaries as the market and the needs of our residents change. When I first reviewed the proposed increases for the 13 cabinet positions presented today, I understood the suggested salaries as the tops of their respective ranges. However, it is now my understanding that, by statute, the proposals represent flat rates and not salary caps.

With that in mind, I conducted a balancing test between what is best for talent development in the civil service and what is the most fiscally responsible path forward for Rhode Island taxpayers. What I recommend today is a phased approach, where the salaries originally proposed by DOA for today's hearing reflect the ultimate goal, but future increases would take place incrementally over time.

For the purpose of today's hearing, I am requesting an increase in base salaries for these directors that is more in line with cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) already provided to most state employees in recent years. My new request, which I've submitted for your consideration and for the official record, also directly addresses the fact that base salaries for many these positions (BHDDH, DBR, DEM, DHS) have remained the same since 2015. The increase for each cabinet salary is equal to a 2.5% increase per year from the date of the last salary increase of each position.

Position	Current Base Salary	Recommended Base Salary for September 2022
Director, BHDDH	\$135,000	\$160,473.00
Director, DBR	\$135,000	\$160,473.00
Director, DOC	\$135,000	\$149,015.00
Director, DEM	\$135,000	\$160,473.00
Director, DHS	\$135,000	\$160,473.00
Director, DOR	\$135,000	\$138,375.00
Director, DOH	\$140,000	\$150,765.00
Director, DOA	\$155,000	\$175,368.00
Secretary, EOHHS	\$155,000	\$175,368.00
Director, DLT	\$155,000	\$166,918.00
Director, DOT	\$155,000	\$175,368.00

There are a few nuanced changes I am also recommending. First, I am requesting to remove the DCYF Director position from the request. I have been informed that we have separate statutory authority to handle the DCYF Director salary through the end of this calendar year. Second, the Director of Public Safety/Superintendent/Commissioner position presents a unique situation. I would ask that we keep the proposed salary increase in the amount of \$19,892 for the remaining periods of the year so that Colonel Weaver can receive the retirement credits he was entitled to under his previous position. I asked him to step up to take on the responsibility of overseeing state law enforcement, and in return he took a very large pay cut. I believe the temporary adjustment to be reasonable and fair, given the circumstances. In the New Year, his base salary would be adjusted according to the same formula I have recommended for the other Cabinet Directors. The total under this formula would be \$166,918.00.

Finally, while you consider all the different factors that go into this request – including reviewing comparable positions, the job market, the responsibilities of the department directors and public comment – I think it’s important to point out that there are deputy positions in many of these agencies that are making more money than the Cabinet Director. That is not right and needs to be fixed. My new proposal takes a first step toward correcting that. Every state employee is accountable to the work that they do, but the Cabinet Director holds a different level of responsibility and that needs to be recognized both financially and at the human level.

We need to maintain hard-working and talented teams to accomplish everything we want to do for Rhode Islanders, and I respectfully request that the Department of Administration amend the original salary proposal to reflect the changes I have outlined above.

Thank you for your time and consideration.