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SERVING THE PUBLIC AND DELIVERING ESSENTIAL SERVICES TO STATE GOVERNMENT

February 18, 2026

Re: LD 2180 - An Act to Make Changes to the Laws Regarding the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of Human Resources and the State Civil Service Appeals Board

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government; I am Margaret Eddy a legislative and policy analyst with the Bureau of Human Resources, and I am testifying today in support of LD 2180 *An Act to Make Changes to the Laws Regarding the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of Human Resources and the State Civil Service Appeals Board*.

Part A of this bill allows non-attorneys to represent the State before the Civil Service Appeals Board. This aligns with many other provisions already in law that allow non-attorneys to represent various Departments before regulatory and administrative agencies. For example, non-attorneys may present before the Workers' Compensation Board, the Probate Court for DHHS, law enforcement officers in traffic court, the Maine PERS, and the Tax Appeals Board, to name a few. We have several incredibly professional and knowledgeable employees working in compliance who have the expertise to represent the State on issues such as reclassification and reorganization appeals, as well as grievances under any collective bargaining agreements. Some of these employees do not have a license to practice law, but neither is that required for their job description or classification. This will give the Department more freedom to assign work to the appropriate experts and provide greater flexibility for potential future hires.

Part B of this bill makes various changes proposed by the Civil Service Appeals Board. The Civil Service Appeals Board is responsible for mediating disputes and hearing appeals on a variety of issues for non-union represented employees and managers. The Board is organized under DAFS and BHR, but is also responsible for reviewing BHR decisions when appealed. Susan Herman, the Civil Service Appeals Board Chairperson, can give you more details about the proposed changes in Part B of this proposed bill. While the Department and Board maintain appropriate separation of functions, the Department supports the changes proposed by the Board in Part B and appreciates the work of the Civil Service Appeals Board.

Part C of this proposed bill seeks to repeal the Employee Suggestion Program. This program provides cash or honorary awards to state employees who find substantial savings and efficiencies in state operations. This program has been redesigned multiple times over the years

to address various concerns. The current law has been in place since 2004, and that redesign added defined timelines, tracking, formal committees, and a centralized board. These solutions have not been effective and have created other problems.

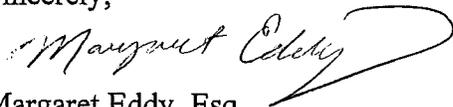
First, this program is very burdensome to administer. To give an example of how the process works, I have attached a flow chart that shows how these suggestions move through the process. As you can see, moving this program is very complex based on a variety of statutory reasons that are both related and unrelated to this specific program.

Second, participation levels over multiple administrations suggest the program no longer aligns with how improvement ideas emerge today. In recent years, very few suggestions have been submitted, and most were ultimately ineligible due to duplication, bargaining requirements, or the need for legislative action. Since 2009, we have had seventy-three suggestions; only **four** (approximately 5%) have been made through the initial vetting process, and out of those four, only **one** was granted a cash award by the Commission. Having this lengthy, complicated process without awarding employees has a negative effect on employee morale.

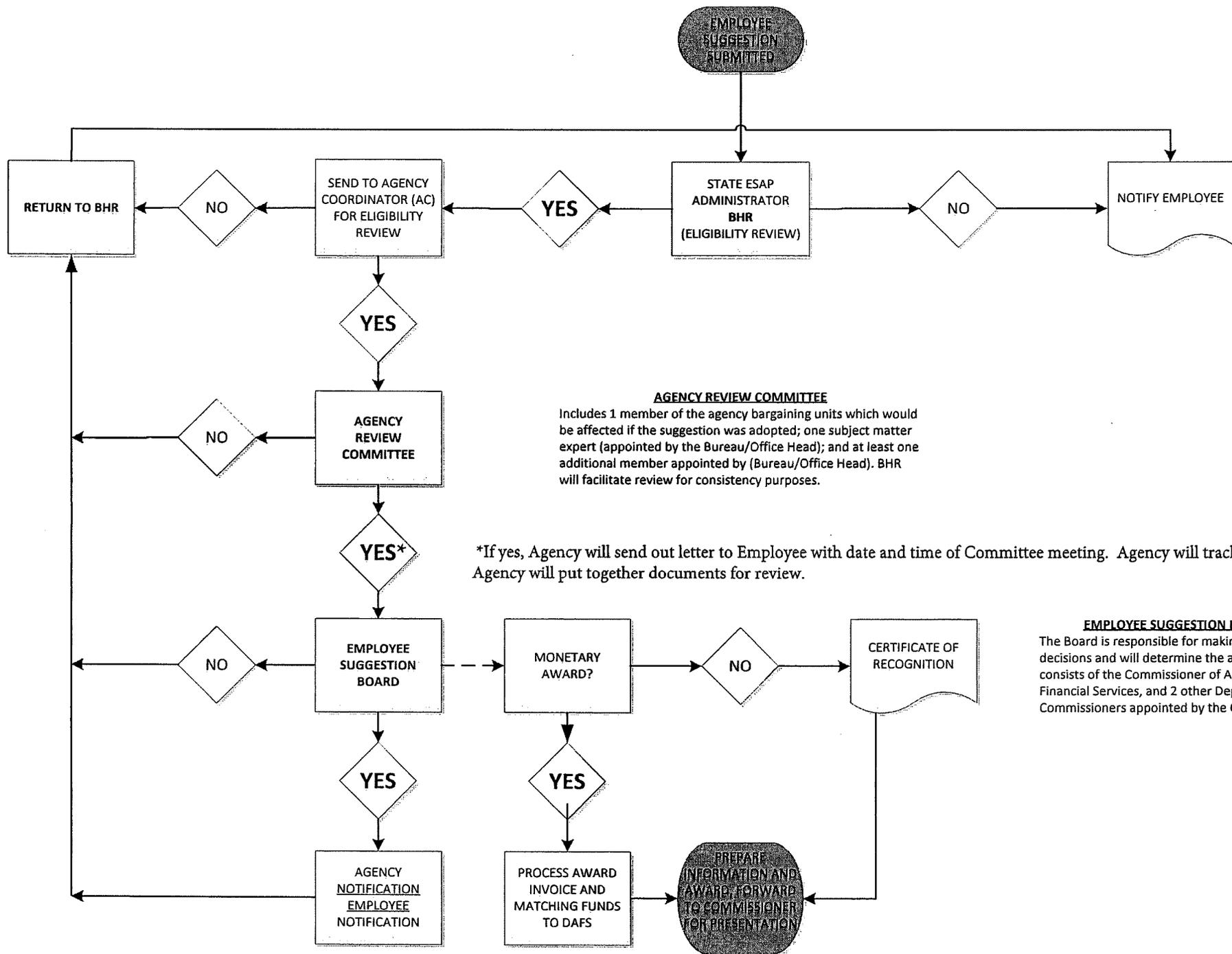
The legislative intention of this statute was to encourage State employees to be creative and innovative to save the State, and ultimately the taxpayer, money. A process that requires several upper-level employees and then Commissioners to invest a great deal of time, only to result in very few awards, has not achieved that. This program, while admirable in its intent, is not creating efficiencies or using resources wisely; it is, in fact, costing the State money while also failing to reward innovative and loyal employees.

Employees may be recognized for their hard work in a variety of ways apart from this program. Employees may be nominated as employees or managers of the year in their respective Departments. Employees may also be awarded special merit increases for exceptional performance if they are below the top step for their respective positions. The repeal of this program does not diminish the good work that employees do; nor does it prevent their recognition.

Sincerely,



Margaret Eddy, Esq.
Legislative/Policy Analyst
Bureau of Human Resources



AGENCY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Includes 1 member of the agency bargaining units which would be affected if the suggestion was adopted; one subject matter expert (appointed by the Bureau/Office Head); and at least one additional member appointed by (Bureau/Office Head). BHR will facilitate review for consistency purposes.

*If yes, Agency will send out letter to Employee with date and time of Committee meeting. Agency will track timeline. Agency will put together documents for review.

EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION BOARD

The Board is responsible for making final decisions and will determine the award. Board consists of the Commissioner of Admin. & Financial Services, and 2 other Departmental Commissioners appointed by the Governor.