

# FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT AND MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR PUERTO RICO



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## **BY ELECTRONIC MAIL**

August 25, 2020

Honorable Eligio Hernández Pérez  
Secretary  
Department of Education

Dear Secretary Hernández Pérez:

We write to express our concern over the news that the Puerto Rico Department of Education (“PRDE”) is looking to rapidly fill long-vacant career positions as soon as August 2020. As explained by the PRDE team, the agency had certain career positions that have remained vacant since 2016, and, as such, trust employees have been performing the work intended for career employees. We have been informed about PRDE’s plan to fill several career position vacancies and proportionally reduce the amount of trust employees within the agency. For this, as recently as August 18, PRDE published job postings (“convocatorias”) to fill specific career positions, including postings for: *Director Ejecutivo de la Docencia*, *Subdirector de Oficina de Presupuesto*, *Director Ejecutivo I y II*, y *Gerente de Operaciones en el área de Matemáticas*. Some job postings will remain open for ten business days, while others will remain open for the minimum of three days. Even though PRDE appears to be following the due process under the law and Government regulations, the goal should be uttermost transparency in the process and that the merit principle is being properly followed.

Objectively, the sudden rush to hire career positions that have stood vacant for a significant amount of time, and with what appears to be an expedited timeline, near the end of the current Government term, would cause one to question motive. We believe without further information, the decision to quickly fill these career positions should prompt further inquiry. For this reason, we request the following information be submitted to the Oversight Board:

1. Brief description as to why these career positions have been vacant since 2016.
2. Brief description of hiring goals and process map of hiring practices, including how candidates applied, how many candidates applied, the screening and interview process to be done, and any rubrics to be utilized in the selection of the candidates.
3. Copy of all job postings.

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4. Detailed comparison of salaries of career positions being filled versus trust employees currently performing the work.
5. Certification that all career positions being filled were budgeted for in FY2021.
6. Certification that trust employees currently performing the work are no longer necessary for the agency's operations, along with a termination timeline.

The above is intended to confirm PRDE is in fact using a strategy to hire the most qualified candidates for the agency. **We urge the Government of Puerto Rico, and PRDE, not to convert trust positions into career positions or hire trust employees other than on a merit basis.** The Government of Puerto Rico must focus on hiring and retaining public officials who are credentialed, capable and adept to perform the work assigned. If hiring is based on merit, then the quality of services provided across the island of Puerto Rico can be improved with integrity.

As always, we look forward to working with you to accomplish the requirements and goals of PROMESA for the benefit of the people of Puerto Rico.

Sincerely,



Natalie A. Jaresko

CC: Mr. Omar Marrero Díaz  
Lcda. Sandra Torres