§ 55. Examination of blind or physically handicapped applicants. 1. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, except as herein provided, neither the state civil service department nor the state civil service commission nor any municipal civil service commission shall hereafter prohibit, prevent, disqualify or discriminate against any person who is physically and mentally qualified, from competing, participating or registering for a civil service competitive or promotion examination or from qualifying for a position in the classified civil service solely by reason of his or her blindness or other handicap; and any such rule, requirement, resolution or regulation shall be void.

2. The state civil service department and each municipal civil service commission shall cooperate with the commission for the visually handicapped in the state department of social services, and the state education department, to the end that there shall be no discrimination against blind or handicapped persons applying in the civil service, unless the condition of blindness or other handicap be such as to prevent the blind or handicapped person from satisfactorily performing the duties of the position to which he seeks appointment.

3. Upon request of an applicant or an eligible for a civil service position who has been found to be blind or otherwise handicapped, the commission for the visually handicapped in the state department of social services, or in the case of an otherwise handicapped person, the state education department, shall obtain from the state civil service department or the appropriate municipal civil service commission a detailed description of all duties of such position and shall investigate the extent of the alleged disability by examination of such applicant or otherwise, and shall determine and report its findings to the state civil service department or appropriate municipal civil service commission, as to the physical ability of such applicant or eligible to perform the duties of such position. Such findings shall be given due consideration by the state civil service department or municipal civil service commission.

4. Where the applicant for a civil service position is not so

physically disabled by blindness or other handicap as to prevent him from satisfactorily performing the duties of the position for which he is applying, to insure competitive equality between the blind or other handicapped person and persons not so handicapped in connection with the taking of written civil service test, the commission for the visually handicapped in the state department of social services, or in the case of an otherwise handicapped person, the state education department, may request from the state civil service department or appropriate municipal civil service commission the furnishing of an amanuensis when necessary, allowing additional time for such test to insure equality.

5. The provisions of this section shall not apply to applicants or eligibles whom the state civil service commission or appropriate municipal civil service commission finds to be incapacitated by mental illness for performance of the duties of the position sought.