

Testimony of Acting Superintendent Dominick L. Chiumento
New York State Police
FY 2024-2025

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Joint Hearing of the Legislative Fiscal Committee

Chairs Krueger and Dinowitz and distinguished members of the joint committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak about the essential work performed by the New York State Police and some of the proposals that Governor Hochul has put forward in her Executive Budget.

I am Dominick L. Chiumento, Acting Superintendent of the New York State Police. I have served as a member of the State Police for nearly 34 years, and I am honored to lead the dedicated sworn and non-sworn members of our great agency in their mission to protect and defend all New Yorkers.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Governor Hochul and the Legislature for your enduring support of the New York State Police. Because of your support, the New York State Police continues to be one of the leading law enforcement agencies in the nation, and a model for reducing crime in our neighborhoods and cities.

For more than a century the New York State Police has provided excellence in public service through the fulfillment of our core missions while also meeting the ever-changing needs of society and the citizens of New York.

The expectations placed upon our agency continue to expand as new and unprecedented challenges arise. Despite this, our members continue to go above and beyond to meet the needs of the people of our state. And while more is demanded of our Troopers than in any other time in our history, we remain steadfast in carrying out the vital undertaking of protecting all New Yorkers.

Governor Hochul has made it clear that public safety is her number one priority, and she has backed that up by providing the necessary funding and resources to help us serve the public by solving and preventing crimes and keeping our roadways safe.

In the prior two years, funding for the Division increased by 27%. Headcount increased by 645 personnel – a 12% increase. The Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget continues to support the New York State Police with budgetary actions. Governor Hochul recommends a workforce of 6,521 Full time employees, an increase of 101 from the previous fiscal year. With the proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Budget, that would be 746 positions in three years. This year's increase is for the creation of a new State Police enforcement unit to combat retail theft.

With earmarked funding in the Governor's proposed budget, we can continue to elevate our efforts to protect all New Yorkers.

One area of concern throughout the country is the proliferation of hate crimes. With funding provided by the Governor last year we have had success in preventing and suppressing bias-motivated attacks by bolstering the work of the Joint Terrorism Task Force and our counter-terrorism strategies. We have been able to dedicate more resources to prevention and education, and increasing our presence in impacted communities.

However, international conflicts escalated in 2023, resulting in a significant increase in activity and threats, and there is more work to be done. The additional funding in the Governor's proposed budget will help the State Police expand efforts to combat crimes that target individuals simply because of their religion, race, or other protected classification.

With the resources outlined in the budget, we can continue to proactively identify potential threats to our state and most vulnerable communities. And, in conjunction with our law enforcement and homeland security partners, we can mitigate these threats to ensure the safety of all New Yorkers. In November Governor Hochul added 5 social media analyst positions, and then 10 positions to the Joint Terrorism Task Force.

Another top priority is addressing the spike in retail thefts. The Governor included funding in her proposed budget that would establish a New York State Police Smash and Grab Enforcement Unit. With the increase in larcenies, our small businesses are feeling the impact of lost inventory and revenue. Additionally, many New Yorkers are uneasy about shopping in certain retail locations, and this unit will help us to expand our strategies to deter and stop such crimes.

In the last two years, under the leadership of Governor Hochul, our top priority has been the fight against gun violence and the proliferation of illegal guns. The Interstate Task Force on Illegal Guns has been critical in gathering, and sharing data, intelligence, and evidence to stop the illegal flow of guns into our communities.

I want to thank the Governor and the members of this committee for recognizing the importance of our efforts to combat gun crime, and for providing the resources that are essential for getting these guns off the streets and preventing violent crimes in our communities.

To highlight our work, the New York State Police seized 1,316 illegal guns in 2023. From 2018 to 2023, illegal gun seizures increased by 159%. And with your help, we can continue this crucial work.

As a designated Point of Contact state, in September of 2023 the Division of State Police launched the New York National Instant Criminal Background Check System also known as NICS. All background check requests for firearms, rifles, shotguns, and ammunition purchases must now be submitted to the State Police. Since the NICS launch, almost 99% of the total number of gun and ammunition checks have been approved.

Agency staffing remains an area of constant executive-level discussion within the State Police and ensuring that our agency is at an adequate staffing level is a top priority.

Thanks to Governor Hochul's commitment, and the commitment of this committee, in October of this year, we were able to launch another Trooper Academy in Cazenovia to accommodate additional Basic School Classes. This is vital to ensuring that adequate staffing levels are maintained to perform our new and core mission priorities, without sacrificing the response time or the safety of our Troopers.

In addition, the New York State Police remains committed to reaching a diverse pool of candidates and we have taken the 30X30 pledge to increase our percentage of female recruits to 30 percent by 2030. In June of 2023, there were 34 graduating females in our Basic School Class, and in our December 2023 class there were 41.

During our July 1 through October 1 recruitment campaign, **12,691** individuals applied to take the exam. We saw a significant increase in applications since the Governor approved our request to raise the maximum age to apply to become a New York State Trooper from 29 to 34.

To build on that momentum, and continue our efforts to diversify our ranks, on October 23, 2023, we reopened the Trooper Entrance Exam application process. Candidates will have until March 4, 2024, to apply to take the exam.

We certainly could not provide the high-quality services that we do without the support of Governor Hochul and you, our legislators.

Our most valuable asset is our Troopers. With your support, the Executive Budget continues to provide our members with the necessary equipment, training, and other valuable resources to carry out their duties. The men and women of the New York State Police serve each day with integrity, pride, and dedication and will continue this tradition of excellence with your support.

Thank you for your continued support and investment in the State Police, and for the opportunity to address you today.

I welcome any questions you may have.