

Testimony of Acting Superintendent Steven A. Nigrelli
New York State Police
FY 2023-2024

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Joint Hearing of the Legislative Fiscal Committee

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

The Governor has been steadfast in her leadership during this time, as have you, and I thank you for your continued support of our efforts. Collaboration and communication are key to solving the problems we face as a society.

My name is Steven Nigrelli and I am the Acting Superintendent of the New York State Police. For over 105 years, the men and women of this agency have preserved the values of service, integrity, and leadership that the New York State Police was founded upon. I am proud to lead this agency in carrying out its mission of protecting and defending all New Yorkers and safeguarding the rights we all hold dear.

This past year has been a challenging one for all society as we continue to navigate the hurdles caused by the unprecedented Pandemic. However, the men and women of the New York State Police, continue to go above and beyond to assist their fellow New Yorkers in their time of need, and remain dedicated to the critical work we do to protect all New Yorkers.

Therefore, the adequate staffing of our agency, from our sworn members to our non-sworn employees, is a top priority as we continue to recover from historic staffing lows brought on by the pandemic, which resulted in a hiring freeze, and two years without graduating a class of new troopers.

Significant efforts have made to start rebuilding our agency. For instance, in 2022, for the first time in our history, we gave the exam by computer not only here in New York, but also across the nation and around the globe at US military installations. This change greatly increased the exams accessibility and outreach.

In 2022, we were focused on recruiting the brightest, best, and most diverse applicant pool, and with your assistance, we saw significant gains in the number of minorities and women who signed up for the exam.

Our continued commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in recruitment and advancement is unwavering and has never been stronger.

Our work to rebuild the staffing numbers of the State Police is not done, as we look to launch another recruitment effort with the goal of holding an exam later this year.

The Governor proposed that we increase our ranks by holding concurrent academy classes to return to adequate and needed staffing levels. Once these classes graduate, we will be able to commit additional and necessary resources to combat emerging public safety challenges, including removing illegal guns, curbing gun violence and fighting the opiate crisis in New York State.

To highlight our work, the New York State Police seized **2,026** illegal guns between August 2021 and December 2022, which is a **138%** increase.

With earmarked funding in the Governor's proposed budget, we can elevate our efforts to identify the sources of illegal firearms and stop the trafficking of these weapons into our state.

Additionally, through our ongoing community engagement efforts we have been extremely effective in building critical relationships with community members and business owners, which has led to valuable collaboration with the public in communities across the state. This type of community-oriented policing is crucial in reducing crimes and building trust with our communities. By increasing staffing levels, which the Governor's proposed budget provides for, we would improve upon this work by providing immediate assistance to those communities, and focus greater attention on violence and quality of life issues within our neighborhoods.

As a result of our work across all arenas, our federal partners have requested additional State Police personnel for various task forces that are at the forefront of combatting gun and narcotics trafficking and violent crimes across New York State. Maintaining a presence on these task forces illustrates our commitment to the crucial goal of taking illegal guns and drugs off our streets and reducing violent crime. We are thankful that the Governor and the members of this committee recognize the importance of increasing our ranks to support this essential work.

The Governor's proposal also provides for a significant and essential increase in our budget to create a satellite laboratory within the NYSP Crime Laboratory System. Our Forensic Investigation System is an indispensable part of the NYSP and

local law enforcement's mission, aiding in the investigation and prosecution of shootings and other serious crimes such as rape and murder. This much needed budget increase will allow us to relocate disciplines and create additional space for our lab Firearms, NIBIN and DNA analysts and scientists to continue to do the work behind the scenes ensuring that the most dangerous offenders are brought to justice.

As Acting Superintendent and a proud 32-year veteran of the New York State Police, I have dedicated my life to serving and protecting the people of New York. I have done this while holding nearly every rank within the agency, giving me a first-hand understanding and insight into the challenges that the 6,000 men and women of the State Police face every day, and the sacrifices they make to carry out our mission. I am truly honored to represent them and call myself a New York State Trooper.

Each day, our members commit themselves to making a difference and improving the quality of life for New Yorkers. As such, the New York State Police has earned the respect and reputation as the premier law enforcement agency in the country.

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

for us to continue the level of service that all New Yorkers demand, expect, and deserve of the New York State Police.

With renewed focus and vigor, we are committed to preserving public safety and making a safer New York.

So, thank you for your continued investment in our mission and our members.

I welcome your questions.