

Testimony of Superintendent Steven G. James
New York State Police
FY 2026-2027

February 12, 2026

Hearing of the Joint Legislative Fiscal Committee

Chairs Krueger and Pretlow and members of the joint committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak about the work performed by the members of the New York State Police and the proposals put forward in the Executive Budget.

I am Superintendent Steven G. James, and I have proudly served as a member of the State Police for 35 years.

I am honored to serve as Superintendent, and I am fully committed to the safety of all those who live, work and visit New York. My priority is ensuring that our members have the resources they need to carry out our mission to serve and protect all New Yorkers.

I thank Governor Hochul and members of the legislature for the continued support of the New York State Police. Without your backing, the State Police would not be capable of

performing at the high level that New Yorkers have come to expect.

Since taking office, Governor Hochul has made public safety her top priority, and the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Executive Budget continues to support the New York State Police and our funding needs for personnel, equipment, and technology.

One of our top concerns is the adequate staffing of our agency. As more demands are placed on our Troopers, it is critically important that we stay ahead of our attrition rate and reach full staffing.

Thanks to continued additional funding for Academy classes, we graduated 414 new Troopers in 2025, and we have a class of more than 170 recruits that will graduate this May.

We also continue to adjust our recruitment efforts to remain competitive in attracting the best and brightest candidates.

We have revised our qualifications, simplified our application process and removed fees for both the application and the entrance examination. We have also restructured our applicant processing operations to be more efficient. While we continue to refine our approach, we have seen an uptick in applications, which is welcome news.

I want to be clear on one point – we have not lowered our rigorous standards to earn an appointment to our Academy. Those who advance past the entrance exam face the same background investigation, thorough psychological evaluation and high physical fitness standards that we are known for.

For our members who are on the road, one of my priorities has been the modernization of our patrol equipment and vehicles, with safety as the number one priority.

We continue to prioritize the replacement of high-mileage and aging patrol vehicles for the safety of our members and to ensure we can respond to emergencies. The proposed budget includes funding to help us continue with our plan, which includes transitioning our entire patrol fleet to SUVs.

Compared to sedans, the SUVs perform better in severe weather, have greater visibility and the capacity to carry the modern equipment that's required for today's Troopers.

Other equipment upgrades include outfitting patrol vehicles with modern rescue and extrication tools. Troopers are usually the first to arrive at serious motor vehicle crashes, and the new tools ensure a more effective response to rescue situations.

We are also progressing with our transition to outer vest carriers. These vests, worn outside of the uniform, include ballistic protection and allow for the weight of equipment to be distributed more evenly, improving safety and reducing the possibility of long-term injury.

These are just a few of the investments we are making to improve safety, reduce injuries and ensure that our members have the equipment necessary to protect New Yorkers.

I want to report back on a few initiatives we have started since 2024.

We continue to strengthen our presence at the northern border, thanks to \$8 million in funding provided for additional personnel and equipment. Trans-national crime, including drug trafficking, remains an issue along the border and we continue to work together with our federal partners.

In March of 2024, we established the Organized Retail Theft Task Force, forging partnerships with national retailers, and local and federal law enforcement partners, and these efforts have resulted in a positive impact.

Since the unit started, we have arrested approximately 1,400 individuals and recovered \$4.2 million dollars of stolen property. That includes breaking up a large Queens-based ring that was targeting Home Depot stores, racking up more than \$2 million in stolen goods.

While we are making strides against Organized Retail Theft, incidents of suspected auto insurance fraud, including staged crashes, continue to rise. These scams are expensive for New Yorkers, adding an average of \$300 dollars per year to insurance premiums. Governor Hochul is proposing \$2 million in this year's budget for State Police to investigate and build cases against criminals who are committing auto-insurance fraud.

We continue our work to reduce gun violence and the proliferation of illegal guns, and we are encouraged by the drop in shootings in many areas across the state.

The support of the Governor and the Legislature has been critically important for providing the necessary resources to get guns out of the hands of criminals, address interstate gun trafficking, and reduce violent crime in our communities.

Through our Interstate Gun Trafficking Task Force, the work of our Community Stabilization Units, the Violent Gang and Narcotics Enforcement Team, and Investigators and Troopers on patrol, we continue to have success.

In 2025, we seized nearly 1,600 illegal guns, and while that was down slightly from 2024, it still represents three times the number of illegal guns we recovered in 2020.

Staying ahead of emerging threats, including terrorism, continues to be a significant concern for our agency. Over the last few years, Governor Hochul and the Legislature have provided funding to increase staffing at the New York State Intelligence Center. These resources have improved our ability to work proactively in gathering and analyzing intelligence, investigating threats, and sharing that information with our law enforcement partners.

I'll close by again, thanking Governor Hochul and each of you for the continued support of our members and our mission. We certainly could not provide the high-quality services that we do without your help.

The Executive Budget provides 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 investment in the State Police, and for the opportunity to address you today.

I welcome any questions you may have.