

FY 2014-2015 Budget Testimony

Division of Criminal Justice Services

February 5, 2014

Good morning Chairman DeFrancisco, Chairman Farrell and distinguished members of the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committees. I am Michael Green, Executive Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Criminal Justice Services. Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today.

Governor Cuomo's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2014-2015 builds on the success of the last three years by continuing our fiscal discipline and spending restraint while taking our commitment to accountability and results to the next level. Simply put, this budget will allow DCJS to continue our mission to enhance public safety and improve criminal justice.

Under Governor's Cuomo's leadership, crime in New York State has remained at historically low levels, with reported murders declining more than 20 percent between 2010 and 2012. Additional reductions are expected when data are finalized for 2013. The FBI reports that New York continues to be the safest large state in the country and, in 2012, moved ahead of South Dakota to become the third safest state overall, behind only the less populous states of North Dakota and Idaho. At the same time, New York's prison population has declined steadily since 1999, from a high of more than 72,000 inmates to a current population of 54,142. New York also has the lowest imprisonment rate of any large state.

In his State of the State message, Governor Cuomo described the three tenets that will serve as the foundation of the State's public safety platform: New York is tough, smart and fair. Today, I will talk to you about how those themes drive our work at DCJS and outline key initiatives for the coming year that build on those themes.

At DCJS, being tough means addressing existing and emerging public safety threats by supporting local law enforcement with cutting-edge technology, resources and support. For instance, DCJS funds four regional Crime Analysis Centers that were recently recognized by both the Center for Digital Government and Digital Communities, and the International Association of Crime Analysts for their innovative contributions to public safety.

Being smart means using the best expertise, evidence and data available to fund effective programs that will reduce crime and recidivism. We just awarded \$5 million to 23 alternative to incarceration and jail based programs, using data to target high need areas and populations with the highest rates of recidivism. We used our new Results First cost benefit model to support this process, which estimates the costs and public safety benefits of different program options and provides guidance on how to most effectively reduce crime and costs.

Being fair means enhancing the integrity of our criminal justice system by supporting reforms that increase our ability to exonerate the innocent and hold the guilty fully accountable. Our DNA technology allows us to do exactly that. Eighteen months ago, the Legislature

enacted a major expansion of the DNA Databank, giving New York one of the most comprehensive DNA statutes in the country.

This year, under the leadership of Governor Andrew Cuomo, DCJS will continue to build on the progress we have made in recent years. I'd like to talk with you today about two new efforts that we believe will further improve our criminal justice system here in New York.

GIVE Initiative

For the past decade, Operation IMPACT has been the State's key grant program for supporting local law enforcement in 17 counties that account for 86 percent of the violent crime outside of New York City. Since it began, overall crime in IMPACT jurisdictions declined 20 percent, with violent crime down 11 percent.

IMPACT provided jurisdictions with resources they wouldn't otherwise have had to develop tough new approaches that allowed them to target crime as it emerged and hold individuals accountable for their criminal behavior. The program strengthened partnerships among federal, State and local law enforcement, and promoted the use of data-driven decision making and intelligence-led policing. It is now time to refine this initiative and the support it provides by leveraging evidence-based approaches to further reduce gun violence.

Governor Cuomo announced the transition of IMPACT to GIVE – the Gun Involved Violence Elimination Initiative – in his State of the State message. GIVE will build on the success of Operation IMPACT by requiring the 17 participating counties to focus their efforts on additional reductions in firearm-related crime, shootings, and homicides. Evidence shows that in order to effectively combat gun crime, law enforcement must use analysis to identify and target the small number of people – and places – that drive the majority of violence in their communities.

The GIVE initiative will be supported by regional Crime Analysis Centers that I mentioned previously, which are located in Albany, Broome, Erie, Monroe and Onondaga counties. These Centers are uniquely equipped to support this new approach. Their services will be instrumental in helping local law enforcement develop person- and place-based strategies to better target, prevent and solve gun-related crime. This will allow jurisdictions to continue to work smarter, not harder.

It is essential that all members of a community are committed to reducing gun violence - law enforcement cannot do it alone. Our overall approach to GIVE recognizes this and complements important programs already operating in several communities in the State, including programs modeled after "Cure Violence", known as "SNUG" in New York. SNUG relies on the use of outreach workers to detect and resolve conflicts before they lead to shootings, or to respond to shootings to prevent retaliation and interrupt the cycle of violence. DCJS currently funds two SNUG programs and recently issued a competitive Request for Proposals to establish other programs. Awards were announced this week to establish programs in five new locations.

To ensure that these programs are true to their evidence-based models, intensive training, technical assistance, evaluation and support will be provided to localities. DCJS will be with them every step of the way. In this time of scarce resources, it is more important than ever to ensure that taxpayer dollars are invested wisely and that we support our programs with training and assistance to make sure they succeed.

Commission on Youth, Public Safety, and Justice

New York State's juvenile justice system has taken significant transformational steps under Governor Cuomo's leadership. Yet, there is one critical area where New York continues to lag behind other states. All youth arrested for a crime at age 16 or 17 are currently processed in the adult criminal justice system regardless of their offense. Only North Carolina and New York draw this hard line of criminal responsibility at age 16.

This policy denies the reality that the adolescent brain is not fully developed, inhibits the delivery of appropriate and effective interventions, and places the personal safety of the small percentage of youth who end up in adult jails and prisons at risk. At the same time, a small number of young offenders pose serious risks to public safety in communities across New York State.

Governor Cuomo is therefore poised to establish the Commission on Youth, Public Safety and Justice to develop a roadmap for New York to become the national leader in youth justice policy. By creating a realistic plan for raising the age, tailoring a system to improve outcomes, and taking explicit care to address the problems of violence among the small number of serious young offenders, the Commission will provide all of us the detail we need to ensure safe communities and successful youth.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the Governor's budget is designed to continue the historic progress we have made, recognizing that when we invest in initiatives that drive crime down, there is a significant return on that investment. Thank you.

