SFY 2021-22 Budget Testimony
Division of Criminal Justice Services
February 10, 2021

Good afternoon Chairwoman Krueger, Chairwoman Weinstein and distinguished members of the Legislature. I am Mike Green, head of the Division of Criminal Justice Services. Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today.

New York is the second safest large state in the nation, ranking just slightly behind our neighbor Pennsylvania. While final crime numbers for 2020 are not yet complete, preliminary data shows that the total number of crimes reported will be similar to the historic low reported in 2019.

The COVID-19 global pandemic has placed extraordinary pressure on all New Yorkers, but communities of color, already facing a disproportionate share of poverty and violence, have borne the brunt of the virus's devastating impact. Although total crime did not increase during this period, our state's largest cities experienced a sharp rise in shooting and gun deaths in 2020, a trend seen in large cities across the country. The 20 police departments participating in the Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative reported a 75 percent increase in shootings and an 82 percent increase in homicides. Increases were also seen in New York City.

Staff supported through GIVE, the SNUG Street Outreach program, and the Crime Analysis Center network are working tirelessly to address these increases through effective, evidence-based strategies, and have adapted their approach in light of the pandemic. An innovative partnership with the state Office of Victim Services has allowed DCJS to establish a comprehensive social work program within its SNUG sites. Through this $2.3 million investment of federal funding, licensed social workers and case managers are helping individuals and families address the long-term trauma resulting from ongoing exposure to community violence.

Last year, the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer ignited a renewed focus on social justice and racial inequality around the country. In response, Governor Cuomo issued Executive Order 203, which requires local police agencies to engage community stakeholders in a collaborative process to reform and reinvent how they protect and serve their communities. This process must be open and transparent, and local governments must ratify or adopt such plan by local law or resolution by April 1.

Strengthening police-community relationships and improving the fairness and effectiveness of the criminal justice system are foundations of DCJS's work. In partnership with the Municipal Police Training Council, the agency has developed model policies to address critical issues, such as body-worn cameras and use of force, and recently completed a comprehensive update of the basic training required for municipal police recruits. The 700-hour training now includes procedural justice and implicit bias, and emphasizes decision-making, communication and de-escalation skills. DCJS also

partnered with the Office of Mental Health to revise and expand course components to improve outcomes for individuals with mental illness and enhance collaboration between police officers and crisis intervention services. In addition, the agency worked with national experts to develop Principled Policing training, a comprehensive course focusing on procedural justice and implicit bias, that is available to all police personnel. DCJS also publishes comprehensive data on arrests, case outcomes and sentencing by race/ethnicity, so New Yorkers can see how the criminal justice system is operating in their communities.

Legislation enacted in 2019 allowed DCJS to seal 3.2 million New York State criminal records for arrests that resulted in low level convictions and arrests older than five years that had no corresponding disposition. As a result of this work, nearly 800,000 individuals now have a clean record, with no New York State criminal history barring them from obtaining employment, housing or professional licenses.

Governor Cuomo's proposed budget also aims to strengthen the police profession, which further builds upon our work. His comprehensive proposal establishes minimum hiring standards for police, subjects police agencies to the same training standards, enhances the police accreditation process, and strengthens the process for decertifying training certificates for officers who are terminated for engaging in serious misconduct.

The proposed Executive budget also will allow DCJS to continue supporting the criminal justice system across the state and evidence-based programs that have received national attention and distinguish New York as a leader in effective public safety policy. Most recently, the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence highlighted our investment of federal funding in SNUG in a report advocating for changes in federal funding to better address community violence. The Pew Charitable Trusts showcased our Criminal Justice Knowledge Bank and Research Consortium, created to promote and expand the use of research and evidence by criminal justice professionals. The budget also includes common-sense legislative changes: adding a new domestic violence misdemeanor to flag convictions that make individuals ineligible to purchase firearms; closing a federal loophole by prohibiting the purchase or acquisition of a rifle, shotgun, or firearm by any person who is subject to an active arrest warrant for a felony or serious misdemeanor offense; and requiring law enforcement agencies to share firearm and ballistic evidence through NIBIN and the ATF's eTrace program, two important tools in the fight against increased gun violence.

Public safety is our highest priority. This 2021-22 Executive budget proposal will allow DCJS to continue its support for programs and initiatives that promote fairness, respect and transparency in the State's criminal justice system, and help keep New Yorkers safe. Your support of our work will allow the State to address gun violence, sustain its historic reductions in crime and continue to reduce the number of individuals who enter the criminal justice system.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.