

**New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Public Protection
February 10, 2021**

Testimony

Good morning. Thank you Chairwoman Krueger, Chairwoman Weinstein, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee.

I am Patrick A. Murphy, Commissioner of the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services. I am proud to share what the agency has been working on and will provide an overview of the Executive Budget as it relates to this work. The staff at the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services have worked tirelessly over the past year to not only fulfill our day to day responsibilities but to also assist in the State's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. The Executive Budget provides the resources the Division needs to accomplish our mission and enhance public safety, including the additional COVID-related operations.

The total agency appropriation in the Executive budget is \$4.97 billion, which includes a \$3.4 billion increase from last year. This increase reflects additional appropriation authority to allow the Division to administer federal aid to State agencies, local and county governments and eligible non-profit organizations.

This federal aid is available as a result of the Governor's March 2020 request for the first ever Major Disaster Declaration for a public health emergency, which was promptly granted by the federal government. This declaration allowed for the construction of alternative care facilities, including the Javits Medical Center, and provides reimbursement for many of the State's response operations, including COVID testing and vaccination sites. The Division partnered closely with the Division of Budget and continues to work with our federal partners to ensure New York receives reimbursement for all eligible activities.

Throughout the Governor's response to the pandemic, the Division has helped coordinate efforts to address numerous challenges presented by the public health crisis. The State's Emergency Operation Center has been activated since last February to support the State's response and recovery efforts. Division staff supported the State's COVID testing and mass vaccination Sites, serving in leadership, safety, and logistics roles. Additionally, Division staff, working with our partners in the National Guard, have undertaken the task of procuring and assembling test kits, which are in turn distributed to State test sites, local governments and school districts. The Division also worked with the National Guard to oversee the logistics for

the receipt, storage and distribution of PPE and other resources needed to combat the pandemic.

Furthermore, Division staff assisted other agencies to perform critical response functions, including the NYS Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance mission, the Department of Health's Call Center mission, and, most recently, the Vaccination Hotline. I'm proud of this service and would like to note over 90% of the Division's staff were directly engaged in COVID missions.

The Division's Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) has been integral to the State's COVID response efforts. OFPC staff have served at field hospitals, State testing and vaccination sites, as well as in the State Liquor Authority's safety missions and the Department of Health's pilot project for the Buffalo Bills games. OFPC ensured the State's new efforts were not only efficient, but safe for all involved.

While COVID was the main focus of the Division's efforts this year, we continued to execute our core missions. This included responding to major weather events throughout the year, including last week's Nor'easter and Tropical Storm Isaias. As part of the State's preparations for Isaias, OFPC deployed swift water technicians and high axle vehicles and OFPC and the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) staff deployed to assist the affected local governments. Following Isaias, New York State again requested and received a federal major disaster declaration, which will provide additional federal funding for New York State and local governments.

The Cyber Incident Response Team continued to assist local governments, school districts, and non-Executive agencies through assessments as well as incident response efforts. The CIRT also partnered with ITS and others to provide support to the State Board of Elections during the 2020 primary and general elections.

The Division's preparation efforts continue as well. OEM worked with State and local partners over the last several months on planning and data collection to better inform storm and flooding preparations, including potential Lake Ontario flooding in 2021. The Division has also continued to work with our county partners on County Emergency Preparedness Assessment efforts. Facilitated by Division staff, the CEPA process allows individual counties to assess their main hazards and ability to respond to these hazards. The assessment data is then used to shore up capabilities and identify areas for improvement achieved through training and additional funding.

Through the Governor's Citizen Preparedness Corps trainings, we continue to enhance the public's preparedness. During 2020, with your assistance, the Division partnered with the National Guard and the Red Cross to train more than 10,000 New Yorkers. Once COVID-19 hit, we moved to virtual only presentations, which allow every New Yorker to access the training to learn how to be better prepared for an emergency. Since the program's inception, approximately 345,000 New Yorkers have been trained in our all-hazards approach to prepare for and respond to emergency situations.

The Division's Office of Counterterrorism has also adapted to be able to fulfill its responsibilities. OCT has continued to conduct critical infrastructure assessments and worked with the New York State Intelligence Center to disseminate emerging threat information to our partners. These efforts have played a critical role in informing law enforcement, businesses, and the public on the latest public safety threats.

Training continues to be an important part of our mission. OFPC continues to train firefighters with a Recruit Firefighter Program at the State Fire Academy this week with 40 recruit firefighters from 17 fire departments throughout the State. OFPC adapted the program to allow for safe in-person training.

The Division also manages over \$1 billion in federal homeland security grants and \$250 million in State awards. Funding directly supports the State and localities' ability to prevent, protect against, prepare for and respond to natural disasters and other emergencies.

The Division's Office of Recovery works directly with FEMA and State, local and non-profit applicants to maximize federal funding to recover from natural disasters and other emergencies including the COVID-19 pandemic.

While it is not possible to cover all the great work of the Division during my testimony, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to continuing our partnership. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.