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January 28, 2022

Hon. Governor Kathleen C. Hochul  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

Recent news reports indicate that the state has spent down virtually all of the \$159 in emergency funding to combat gun violence that was announced last July by former Governor Andrew M. Cuomo. Considering the size and scope of this massive expenditure of taxpayer dollars — as well as the fact that gun violence and violent crime continue to plague cities across our state — I am writing to request detailed information regarding how this money has been spent.

Obviously, the entirety of this \$159 million could have been used to provide additional resources to local law enforcement for equipment, training and investigations designed to keep our communities safe from violent criminals. Instead, it appears two-thirds of it went to local civic groups and politically connected non-law enforcement entities.

While I believe investment in skill-building and job-training is a positive long-term goal, I am concerned that such significant financial support for these organizations — which are not equipped or qualified to patrol our neighborhoods or get violent criminals off our streets — will only have marginal impacts on public safety in the short-term, and will do little to address the immediate crisis of violence many local communities currently face.

Reportedly, one non-profit group was approved for \$18.5 million in funding to help create 2,400 long-term jobs for young adults in communities distressed by gun violence. According to one recent article, ("*Hochul aims to launch office for gun violence prevention,*" Albany Times Union, 1/25/22) this initiative had only created about 20 jobs, according to the state Department of Labor.

As deliberations on a new 2022-23 State Budget get underway, and with the prospect of similar, new expenditures being approved, I am writing to request a fully detailed accounting of the \$159 million that has already been spent. In particular, my colleagues and I would like to know the following:

- Which government agencies, groups or entities have received funding?
- What process was used to determine how this money would be spent, and who made the ultimate selection of funding recipients?
- Do you have any data showing a correlation between the millions spent and a reduction (or increase) of violence?
- What metrics are being utilized to determine the success or failure of these efforts?

- Do you possess any data showing that funding local activist groups and civic organizations produces safer communities than providing those same resources to law enforcement professionals?
- Were any representatives of local law enforcement consulted about how and where this money would be spent?
- Do any of these groups or organizations have a background in public safety or law enforcement?
- Precisely what has this massive expenditure of funds been spent on? What restrictions were placed on the use of this money? How much of it has been spent on salaries and/or new hires?
- If new staff has been hired, what is the training, background and expertise of those who have been hired? How will these new staffing expenditures directly impact crime reduction?

In addition, our Senate Republican Conference is concerned about the disparity between funding for these sorts of long-term plans to address gun violence, and the lack of funding provided to the District Attorney offices that are responsible for investigating and successfully prosecuting violent offenders to help get them off our streets. In particular, District Attorneys are still struggling to comply with the recently enacted discovery reforms because of a lack of funding for critical technology and staffing. In the recent Public Protection Budget Hearing, District Attorneys Association of New York State President J. Anthony Jordan, said that the costs of the staffing and technology required to comply with the discovery laws is over \$100 million. The funding that the state has provided through the Criminal Justice Discovery Compensation fund has been inadequate to address the needs of District Attorney's Offices. Clearly, if we want to tackle gun violence, we need to make sure that prosecutors have the resources they need for every stage of the prosecution, including the discovery stage, otherwise they risk the dismissal of important cases because their lack of resources resulted in missing or late discovery.

Our state is plagued by a crime crisis that continues to surge. From 2019 to 2020 the murder rate increased 46.7% and gun crime outside of New York City increased 28.9%. Our conference continues to believe that fundamental legislative reforms are needed to curb this crisis of violent crime. From repealing the disastrous cashless bail and discovery "reforms," to overhauling the State Parole Board which continues to set violent criminals free, to restoring support for New York's courageous law enforcement professionals, we clearly have a great deal of work to do during this year's session. While legislative reform is crucial, I believe the authors of these "reforms" need to change their narrative to make it explicitly clear that violent felonies are not acceptable anywhere in this State, and that committing such acts will be punished to the fullest extent of the law.

With the State Budget now taking center stage in terms of the legislative calendar, we are now seeking answers to the questions set forth above as quickly as possible.

Before hardworking taxpayers are asked to spend one dollar more — and before even more New Yorkers fall victim to this wave of violent crime — we need to know as quickly as possible if this funding has had any meaningful public safety impact in our local communities.

Thank you for your prompt response to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert G. Ort". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Robert G. Ort  
NYS Senate Minority Leader