KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

DRU RAI
NYS Chief Information Officer

TO: Dear Chairpersons Krueger and Weinstein,

FROM: Dru Rai

DATE: January 24, 2024

RE: NYS Office of Information Technology Services, Budget Testimony

Please find a copy of my testimony below.

Thank you Chairs Krueger and Weinstein, and honorable members of the Legislature for the invitation.

I am Dru Rai, New York's Chief Information Officer and Director of the state's Office of Information Technology Services.

Governor Hochul appointed me as CIO in October, and I am humbled and honored to serve alongside you.

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As the state's IT service provider, ITS supports mission critical applications for 53 state agencies - - and manages 37,000 mobile phones and more than 100,000 workstations for state employees.

Meanwhile, ITS is at the nexus of many of the most important challenges now facing New York State.

Our agency is tasked with protecting the state's systems from cyber attacks, and make no mistake, the threats grow every day.

The FBI estimates more than 25,000 New Yorkers fell victim to cybercrimes totaling $777 million last year - - and cyber threat actors who have made New York a target are better resourced and more organized than ever before.

The good news is we have recently created a number of distinct advantages for our state.

We now have New York's first-ever comprehensive cybersecurity strategy in place, and are implementing it with our state and local partners.

While we will continue to need additional resources, Governor Hochul has advanced cyber funding that reflects the risks we face and the opportunities we must seize. I thank this Legislature for supporting critical funding in last year's budget, and for recognizing that cyber resilience must continue to be a top state priority.

Many of you know about the Joint Security Operations Center or JSOC, established in 2022, a collaboration model for cyber intelligence gathering and dissemination.

We are now working with New York City, the Big 5 Upstate cities of Albany, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers, and nearly every non-New York City county.

JSOC is a true New York success story, and we continue to grow its capabilities every day.

Under this model, the state has provided endpoint detection technology to local governments to bolster their security, and we continue to enhance our own defenses in a number of ways - - strengthening our overall policies, enhancing password requirements and putting Multi-Factor Authentication in front of our public facing programs and applications.

In addition, we are building statewide privacy and data programs to better protect our citizens and build public trust.

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Meanwhile, our ITS team is working closely with the state's first-ever Chief Customer Experience Officer to get agencies thinking in a new and different way - - from the customer's perspective.

As Governor Hochul has said, it shouldn't be difficult, frustrating or painful to interact with a government agency. Thanks to many of the initiatives already underway, we are improving the user experience and strengthening the bond between this government and the New Yorkers we all serve.

Following the pandemic, ITS has accelerated the digitization of state services and continues to assist a number of agencies with major modernization projects – including DOL, DMV, Tax and others.

To reduce fraud and ensure more seamless interactions with government, we have completed the initial stages of an initiative known as "One ID," whose end state will result in a single login that can be used to access programs, services and benefits across all state agencies.

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We are working to support the next phase of what the state is already doing with AI so that New York - - with a strong tech and start-up ecosystem - - is at the forefront of this evolving technology.

At the Governor's direction, ITS recently produced the state's first-ever comprehensive AI policy, which will serve as a roadmap to help state agencies move forward in a responsible, ethical and transparent way.

And finally, we will be seeking your support to grow our IT workforce with resources proposed as part of the Governor's Budget.

These new resources are a strong first step toward helping us right-size New York IT - - boosting our ranks to meet the state's rapidly growing digital needs.

It will cement New York as a national leader in delivering first-class IT products and services made in New York.

It will more fully secure the state network against global cyber threats.

It will help create a more seamless customer experience for New Yorkers who rely on state services and benefits.

And, it will populate our ITS workforce with state employees who live, work and have a stake in New York - - thereby saving taxpayer dollars.

New York can go higher and achieve more if we grow New York IT, and we look forward to working with you to make it happen.

By partnering together, I have no doubt we can deliver innovative technology solutions that work for state agencies and all New Yorkers.

Technology is changing at such a rapid pace that at times it is almost too difficult to comprehend.

However, it is our responsibility to leverage those changes for good, so we can smartly and confidently reimagine what is possible for New York.

Thank you, and I am happy to answer your questions.