



**New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services
Testimony of Commissioner Rossana Rosado
Joint Legislative Hearing on FY 2025-26 Executive Budget: Public Protection
Thursday, February 13, 2025**

Good Afternoon Chairs Krueger and Pretlow, Legislative Fiscal Committee members, and other distinguished members of the Legislature. I am Rossana Rosado, Commissioner of the Division of Criminal Justice Services. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss Governor Kathy Hochul's FY 2025-2026 Budget for DCJS.

Before I turn to the budget, I wanted to share a brief story. Years ago in the Bronx, there was a fifth-grade girl who was the teacher's pet, strait laced, and never started trouble. One day a new student from Bolivia arrived in class. He had a hook instead of his left hand because he lost his arm to a landmine explosion.

It did not take long for the teasing and bullying to start for the new kid. Seeing that the taunts brought shame and rejection to the boy's face, the girl approached the main bully in class and told her to stop. The bully confronted the girl after school. She was terrified, but didn't shy away from the fight. She swung to defend herself and the boy. A teacher rushed to separate them, and was stunned to see it was the goody two-shoes of the class!

When the dust settled, the girl was relieved that the fight *she never wanted* was over, but the cheers of her classmates inspired her. She was proud that she had stood up for someone who could not stand up for himself. In that moment, she not only provided a measure of safety (admittedly an unsanctioned one), but the chance for the boy to be more fully embraced by his new peers and community.

In the five decades since I threw that punch, I continue to draw inspiration and gain confidence from that girl and her fight for justice.

Today marks my fourth budget testimony as Commissioner of this exceptional agency. From crime prevention to community re-entry, DCJS helps our law enforcement and community partners keep New Yorkers safe and ensure a justice system that works for all.

While I've used the term – "multi-function support agency" – in the past, what I really mean is that we *convene*, *facilitate*, and *support* all stakeholders in this field with our resources, expertise, and information. It is our privilege and power to help those who directly help others.

With the support of Governor Hochul and the State Legislature, we have navigated a series of crises: the pandemic, social unrest, economic anxiety, violent extremism, and a surge in shootings that stunned New York and the nation. Together, we answered the call to serve New Yorkers by leveraging our largest-ever \$850 million budget and growing workforce to deliver proven strategies that uproot crime and tend to its ripple effects throughout our neighborhoods.

Last year alone, we:

- delivered record funding through nearly 3,900 grants to law enforcement agencies, community-based organizations, and local governments,
- helped reduce gun violence through the Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative by providing \$36 million in 21 counties to advance evidence-based enforcement strategies,
- answered 130,000 requests for assistance from hundreds of law enforcement agencies through our 11 Crime Analysis Centers (CAC) supported by \$18 million,
- strengthened 10 communities through Project RISE (Respond, Invest, Sustain, Empower), investing \$20 million to more than 100 organizations that deliver youth and family programs and improve neighborhood safety,
- launched a new \$35 million program: STRIVE (Statewide Targeted Reductions in Intimate Partner Violence) to improve the public safety response to domestic violence and better support survivors in New York City and 20 other counties, and
- equipped 378 local law enforcement agencies with \$127 million in new technology to better prevent and solve crimes.

We also strengthened our partnership between the State's Office of Gun Violence Prevention and our nationally recognized SNUG outreach program. This partnership now leverages both the public health and public safety approaches to prevent gun violence. In 14 communities, SNUG teams work to interrupt the cycle of violence by engaging young people and connecting them with the support they need to increase opportunities and promote positive outcomes.

Looking back on the last three years, the DCJS story is one of humanity and a holistic focus on the work of justice and safety. It has taken grit, grace, and a great deal of resources, but it is working. We have seen the justice system recover from the pandemic disruptions, crime drop, and gun violence plummet to record lows.

Reported crime through the first nine months of 2024 declined by 8 percent outside of New York City with decreases in both violent and property crime compared to the prior year. In New York City, overall reported crime remained flat through September last year compared to 2023 with a slight increase in violent crime and slight decrease in property crime.

In our GIVE jurisdictions – which account for roughly 90 percent of all firearm-related violent crime outside of New York City, – we saw the fewest shootings on record last year (588). This is a 53 percent decrease from the peak in 2021 (1,262). In New York City, there were 903 shootings last year, a 42 percent decrease from the 2021 peak (1,562). By cutting gun violence nearly in half throughout the entire state, there were 1,333 fewer people shot and 251 fewer lives lost in 2024 compared to where we were just three years ago. While even one person victimized by senseless violence is a tragedy, this is remarkable progress.

As proud as I am that DCJS continues its wide-ranging and far-reaching efforts to build safe and strong communities, we still have more work to do. The Governor's Budget again places public safety at the forefront, featuring initiatives and investments in DCJS to protect and serve all New Yorkers.

This budget:

- expands support for law enforcement analysis and intelligence-sharing through a new statewide joint crime analysis and support center,
- secures additional funding for law enforcement technology and equipment to boost crime prevention and community engagement,
- increases the resources available for evidence-based policing strategies in the 24 counties that are served by the GIVE and STRIVE initiatives,
- doubles funding for rape crisis and sexual assault programs to better support survivors,
- reforms discovery to streamline the process, clarify requirements, and promote fair and full justice,
- supports safe and vibrant communities through the Governor's action plan for neighborhood safety in the Bronx and beyond, and
- increases police presence on the New York City subways and platforms.

As I think about this year's budget and this moment in time, I think back to my fifth-grade self. How do we use our fight to help others in ways that will become our legacy? How do we work together to create a more lasting peace, build community, and promote opportunity? How do we make sure that people both feel safe and are safe where they live, work, learn, and visit? My answer is simple in words, but supreme in action... we must rededicate ourselves to justice and heed the call to act in service and betterment of others.

As we renew our commitment to justice, we must embrace our shared humanity: doing what is just and right, tending to those in need, healing those in pain, and making communities whole.

The Governor's proposed budget balances safety with fairness and enforcement with prevention. With your support, it will allow DCJS to continue to answer the call: ensuring safer neighborhoods, stronger partnerships, and a fair and equal justice system built on trust and accountability. This budget empowers us to provide essential resources, training, and assistance that local partners rely on every day.

I want to express my sincere appreciation to Governor Hochul for her unwavering leadership on public safety. I want to extend my gratitude to the thousands of on-the-ground partners who are doing the work and truly changing lives. I also want to recognize the exceptional DCJS team for their dedication and innovation. Their commitment has strengthened our mission and created a top workplace that values every team member.

Finally, our work is only possible because of the ongoing support we receive from the State Legislature and from members who represent every corner of this Great State. Thank you for your service and your time today. I look forward to answering your questions.