

Testimony of Superintendent Steven G. James
New York State Police
FY 2025-2026

February 13, 2025
Hearing of the Joint Legislative Fiscal Committee

Chairs Krueger and Pretlow and members of the joint committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak about the work performed by the members of the New York State Police and the various proposals put forward in the Executive Budget.

I am Superintendent Steven G. James, and I have proudly served as a member of the State Police more than 34 years.

I am honored to serve as Superintendent, and I am fully committed to ensuring that our members have the resources they need to carry out our mission to serve and protect all New Yorkers.

I thank Governor Hochul and the Legislature for the continued support of the New York State Police. Without your backing, the State Police would not be capable of performing at the high level that New Yorkers have come to expect.

The expectations placed upon our organization continue to expand as new challenges arise. However, our members continue to go above and beyond to meet the needs of the people we serve.

While more is demanded of our Troopers than in any other time in our history, we continue in carrying out the vital undertaking of protecting all people in our great State.

Governor Hochul's top priority is public safety, and she continues to provide the necessary funding and resources required for us to carry out our expanded missions.

The Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Executive Budget continues to support the New York State Police and our funding needs for personnel, equipment, and technology.

With the funding in the Governor's proposed budget, we can continue to boost our efforts to protect all New Yorkers.

One area of concern continues to be terrorism and increased hostilities between multiple foreign nations and terrorist organizations. Over the last two years, Governor Hochul has provided funding to increase staffing at the New York State Intelligence Center, improving our ability to work proactively in gathering and analyzing intelligence, investigating threats, and

sharing that information with our local and federal law enforcement partners.

In this budget, the Governor has proposed \$1.7 million to expand our cyber analysis unit, which will provide further enhancements to those capabilities.

In addition, we are looking to strengthen our presence at the northern border. The Governor has proposed \$8 million to enhance our criminal enforcement efforts throughout the north country. This money will fund the purchase of technology and equipment to support intelligence gathering, criminal investigations and interdiction, and enforcement of New York State laws. Our focus at the border remains counterterrorism, trans-national organized crime and human trafficking.

Another top priority is addressing the spike in retail thefts. Last year we received funding to establish the Organized Retail Theft Task Force. Our work to stand up the unit started last March, and our members embraced the challenge, making an immediate impact on the problem. We forged partnerships with national retailers, went into local communities and gathered intelligence from local shop owners, and worked alongside local and federal law enforcement partners.

In 2024, task force members arrested 688 people on 1,100 charges and recovered nearly 200-thousand dollars in stolen goods.

Our work is not done; while we have made progress, we still have many ongoing investigations involving retail theft, and the Governor has included funding in this budget to maintain the momentum.

We continue our work to reduce gun violence and the proliferation of illegal guns. I want to thank the Governor and all of you again for providing the necessary resources to get guns out of the hands of criminals, address interstate gun trafficking, and reduce violent crime in our communities.

Through our Interstate Gun Trafficking Task Force, the work of our Community Stabilization Units, the Violent Gang and Narcotics Enforcement Team, and Investigators and Troopers on patrol, we continue to have success.

In 2024, we seized 1,706 illegal guns, an increase of more than 160-percent compared to 2018. With your help, we can continue this critically important work.

Agency staffing remains an area of constant executive-level discussion within the State Police and ensuring that our organization is at an adequate staffing level is another top-level priority.

The funding provided for additional Academy classes at Cazenovia has helped us get closer to our rate of attrition, and we appreciate that support. Last week, 176-new Troopers graduated, which is our last class from Cazenovia.

Recruitment remains an area of concern to all law enforcement agencies — and we are no exception. We have an exam sign up that's been underway since last August and runs through July of this year. We continue to examine ways to identify and reach qualified candidates.

The Governor has proposed eliminating the maximum age to become a Trooper, which is now 35 years old. We believe this will give us access to a new pool of qualified recruits, particularly those who are retiring from military service, or leaving other law enforcement agencies.

She has also proposed raising the mandatory retirement age to 63. We think it's critically important to retain the most experienced and knowledgeable members of our organization, who are difficult to replace.

I want to briefly touch on a few other important projects:

Our body-worn cameras have proven their value as we investigate complaints by the public against our members. The number of substantiated complaints is a fraction of the total number of interactions we have with the public, which underlines the continued professionalism of our members.

We continue to prioritize the replacement of high-mileage and aging patrol vehicles for the safety of our members and to ensure we can respond to emergencies. The proposed budget includes funding to help us continue with our plan, which includes transitioning the entire patrol fleet to SUVs.

I'll close by again recognizing the support that Governor Hochul and the legislature have provided to our members. We certainly could not provide the high-quality services that we do without that support.

The Executive Budget continues to provide our members with the necessary equipment, training, and other valuable resources to carry out their duties. The men and women of the New York State Police serve each day with integrity, pride, and dedication and will continue this tradition of excellence with your support.

Thank you for your continued investment in the State Police, and for the opportunity to address you today.

I welcome any questions you may have.