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Testimony Before the New York State Budget Hearing Committee

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Given by Christopher M. Quick, President

New York State Police Investigators Association

Good Afternoon Senate and Assembly members.

My name is Christopher M. Quick, I am an Investigator with the New York State Police and proudly serve as the President of the New York State Police Investigators Association (NYSPIA). NYSPIA represents 1,168 State Police Senior Investigators and Investigators that are strategically deployed throughout New York State. These Senior Investigators and Investigators are assigned to stations or special details and are assigned to the New York State Police Bureau of Criminal Investigation or more commonly referred to as the BCI. The Senior Investigators and Investigators who investigate serious crimes are commonly known as the back room Investigators. Their offices are generally located in the back of the State Police barracks where they investigate crimes that include:

- Homicides
- Larcenies
- Robberies
- Burglaries
- Identity Theft
- Sex Crimes

The BCI Members in the special details work in sensitive assignments dealing with:

- Counter Terrorism
- Forensic Investigations
- Narcotics, including the opioid crisis
- Auto Theft
- Dignitary Protection
- Special Investigations
- Gaming
- Computer Crimes

It is an honor once again to speak on behalf of the brave women and men that make up the BCI and I would like to thank all the Assembly and Senate members for the invitation and opportunity to testify. This Public Protection Hearing Board has continually been supportive of the NYSP and has echoed our message to the New York State Legislature. Speaking for the members of NYSPIA I would like to extend our thank you for your continued support.

The New York State Police is made up of highly qualified candidates that go through academic testing, rigorous physical training and extensive background checks that include a polygraph examination. The BCI is responsible for completing applicant background investigations and administering polygraph exams. It is common to examine 2000 applicants in order to acquire 200 candidates for the State Police Academy. After a candidate is accepted to attend the Academy, testing continues throughout the 6-month Academy until graduation when they then become a Trooper. BCI Members are then chosen from this elite pool of candidates after they have demonstrated, through their work as a Trooper, that they are truly the best of the best.

On May 4, 1935, the Bureau of Criminal Investigations was established and has grown to include many specialized units that focus on different types of crimes in this fast paced ever changing world. Since then we have witnessed tremendous advances in technology, transportation, electronics and communications that contribute to multiple avenues to combat crime and terrorism resulting in the need for specialized units. The ever evolving need for police protection has resulted in the formation of new and cutting edge BCI Units such as the Forensic Identification Unit, Joint Terrorist Task Force, Sexual Assault Unit, Special Investigations Unit, Violent Felony Warrant Unit, Community Narcotics Unit, Drug Enforce Task Force, Narcotic Enforcement Unit, Computer Crimes Unit, Gaming Unit, Financial Crimes Unit, Gang Investigation Unit, Major Crimes, Border Intelligence Unit, Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Intercept Unit ("CALEA"), Child Abuse Unit, Bias Crimes Unit and the New York State Intelligence Center. In this age of technology, the crimes being investigated by the BCI require a higher level of specialized training and skills. It should be noted that the BCI is not only responsible for its own investigations but it also assists local law enforcement agencies across the state. The BCI is continually tasked with taking the lead on high profile public safety threats that put the citizens of New York at risk. Whether it is terrorism, sexual assaults on our college campuses, gang violence or the opioid crisis, the BCI is at the forefront of combatting these crimes. As a result, the need for additional Investigators is even more compelling.

The BCI has a diverse mission and although not as visible as the uniform force, the mission that it fulfills is extremely important for the safety of the citizens in New York State. Many of our BCI Members act in undercover capacities. The Investigators often wear typical street clothes to blend into the communities in which they work. Whether they are in the field performing surveillance, conducting drug or counterterrorism investigations or following a target through traffic, the vehicles that BCI Members drive must also blend in with the general public. They simply cannot operate a typical fleet type vehicle because it increases their chances of being identified as "Police" and jeopardizes their safety and the investigation. Last year Division purchased 35 non-traditional police vehicles that included makes such as Nissans, Hondas and Hyundais. These vehicles are referred to as "funny cars" as they don't fit the mold of a typical police car. The "funny cars" are very useful for the above described use and disguise the Investigators.

Over the past three years the Public Protection Hearing Board has heard the concerns that BCI Members were consistently driving high mileage vehicles with few new BCI vehicles being purchased between 2009 -2012. Without the BCI fleet being replenished, BCI Members were forced to operate vehicles with excessive mileage and undue wear and tear. It was not uncommon for emergency vehicles being

operated by members to be 8 to 10 years old with 150,000 to 200,000 miles. The Public Protection Board was made aware of this situation and responded by appropriating adequate funding for the purchase of new vehicles in 2016 and 2017. The plan is a work in progress and the fleet slowly continues to improve. The Board's attention to this matter is sincerely appreciated but there is more to be done.

In my 2017 testimony before this Board I explained the need for Class C Uniforms for the BCI. The BCI is the undercover unit of the New York State Police and are not issued a uniform that would identify them as law enforcement officers. However, on occasion BCI Members are assigned duties in which it is important for them to be recognized as law enforcement officers for their own safety and that of the public. For example, Investigators have responded to natural disasters such as Hurricanes Sandy and Irene, the Matt/Sweat manhunt (Adirondacks), the Ralph Phillips manhunt (western New York) and the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Other examples are organized searches for missing persons, collection of evidence and training. Currently, an Investigator wears what he/she had worn to work that day, whether it is a suit and a tie or jeans and sneakers. Recently Superintendent George Beach II authorized a Class C Uniform designed to be worn by Division members in those types of work which demand a recognized police presence. The Class C Uniform's design is a black cargo type work pant and gray shirt marked with State Police identification. The cost to outfit one Investigator with two sets of Class C Uniforms and footwear would be $434.76. Approximately $521,676.00 would need to be appropriated to outfit BCI Members with these Class C Uniforms.

Manpower in the BCI has modestly increased this past year. The membership has grown to 1,168 from 1,104 last year. These numbers still do not come close to the BCI membership high of 1,316 in 2008. During last week's budget meeting, it was announced that the Governor is adding 30 additional spots to supplement the BCI. These additional BCI members will consist of the newly formed Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Program and the MS-13 Gang Task Force. These are critical programs that require additional manpower.

Superintendent George Beach II continues to request Recruit Basic School classes at the State Police Academy in order to bolster the strength of the Division and account for retirements. In 1986 and 1987 Division hosted double academy classes in Albany and Brockport. Each class and location had approximately 150 recruits graduate totaling an addition of 600 Troopers to the ranks in that one year. Those members are now approaching retirement. These retirements will spike the attrition rate for the State Police. The recent classes that have graduated have added to the number of Troopers in the field, primarily to Troop NYC, but these additions are still failing to keep up with the attrition rate of the Division. New York State is ranked fourth in terms of population. Over 19.8 million people reside in this Great State, 8.5 million living in New York City alone. The population has grown by more than a half a million people in the last decade. As Governor Cuomo continues to encourage growth and job creation in New York State, we must be able to ensure the safety of its residents and visitors alike. The only way to do that is to make sure we have the proper staffing levels for law enforcement.

Terrorism is a prime concern in this day and age. The United States of America continues to be on high alert. In order to thwart terrorist attacks on the public, counterterrorism efforts are a priority in these ever changing times we live in. When an act of terrorism is successful, it strengthens the terrorists' confidence giving them motivation and causes greater public fear. Unfortunately, there are times when uncovering a terrorist plot is like finding a needle in a haystack. To help us in our war on terrorism even more attention needs to be dedicated to gathering intelligence, monitoring the potential terrorists and taking action by either preventing the terrorist acts or eradicating the terrorist lone wolf or cell groups. The men and women of the BCI will continue to be involved on the front line of these counter terrorism initiatives. We need the tools and equipment to protect the public and themselves in this war on terrorism.

Governor Cuomo recognizes the threat of Terrorism and has dedicated a uniform Trooper presence in New York City. Governor Cuomo identified precise locations vulnerable to a terrorist attack. The Governor first concentrated on the security of the mass transit systems by having Troopers ride the trains and be vigilant at the train stations. The Governor's next step was to permanently assign Troopers to NYC, continuing with the aforementioned actions and progressing to special street patrols in his continuing efforts to make the people of New York safe and secure. This year as the rise of domestic terrorism continues the Governor has tasked the State Police with patrolling and securing Grand Central Station, Penn Station, John F. Kennedy and LaGuardia Airports also securing the Bridges and Tunnels of NYC. Large masses of travelers make these transportation hubs environments rich for a possible terrorist attack prior to any security checks performed by the Transportation Security Administration. In 2017 additional Investigators were assigned to these locations to observe the behavior of people and monitor suspicious activity. It is important that BCI manpower be increased in NYC as the threats of terror continue to rise.

In closing, we are calling on you to ensure our Investigators and the public are safe by adequately funding the Division of State Police to increase the number of BCI Investigators, allow for the purchase of unmarked vehicles, Class C uniforms and other necessary safety equipment as well as funding new and regular academy classes. These steps will allow the BCI to accomplish its core mission of protecting and serving the people of this great state.

The issues I have discussed with you are important to the citizens of New York, the members of the New York State Police Investigators Association and all the members of the Division of State Police. I would like to thank all of you for the opportunity to allow me to testify here today. At this time, I welcome any questions that you may have for me.