

**New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services  
Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Public Protection  
January 25, 2022**

**Jackie Bray Testimony**

Good morning. Thank you, Chair Krueger, Chair Weinstein, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee.

My name is Jackie Bray, I am the Acting Commissioner of the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services. It is my honor to share with you the accomplishments of our agency and provide an overview of the Executive Budget as it relates to our mission. Division staff continue to work tirelessly on COVID-19 response and recovery efforts while performing daily emergency management duties, including responding to extreme weather and natural disasters and providing training to first responders. The Executive Budget provides necessary resources for the Division to carry out its mission of enhancing public safety and continuing to respond to the pandemic.

The total agency appropriation in the Executive Budget is \$4.9 billion, which includes \$32.5 million in new appropriations. The Executive Budget puts forth additional funding to build a new Emergency Operations Center (EOC), expand the Division's cybersecurity capabilities and further improve the State Preparedness Training Center (SPTC).

The Executive Budget continues last years' appropriation authority of \$4.15 billion, which will allow DHSES to administer federal funding in New York State. This funding supports COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, including testing and vaccination operations as well as other costs associated with reopening public services during the pandemic. The Division works directly with FEMA and State, local and non-profit applicants to maximize federal funding to recover from natural disasters and other emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

This past year, there were two federal Major Disaster Declarations in New York, Tropical Storm Fred in August and Hurricane Ida in September. This appropriation will also help deliver funding to New York to rebuild and recover from the impacts of these two storms.

Following the devastation of Hurricane Ida, Division staff worked with our federal and local partners to quickly assess damages, which ultimately led to the approval of FEMA's Public Assistance Program for 13 counties. This partnership also resulted in FEMA authorizing Individual Assistance programs in New York State for the first time since Superstorm Sandy.

Through the Individual Assistance program, over \$195 million was directly provided to more than 88,000 New Yorkers to help them recover and rebuild.

The Division also worked to secure federal Public Assistance for nine counties impacted by Tropical Storm Fred. While our request for Individual Assistance was denied, we are still fighting for Steuben County and are currently in the process of obtaining a Small Business Administration Disaster Declaration that will provide low-interest loans to homeowners and businesses in Steuben.

Throughout the pandemic, the Division has managed and coordinated efforts to address the many challenges presented by the ongoing public health crisis, including testing and vaccination operations, PPE storage and distribution and local requests for assistance. These are all coordinated through the State Emergency Operation Center, which has been continuously operational since March of 2020. Designed and built during the Cold War, this underground fallout shelter is outdated, with space and technology limitations. Governor Hochul's budget puts forth \$25 million in capital funding for the development of a modernized Emergency Operations Center which will enhance the State's preparedness and response capabilities.

Governor Hochul's proposed budget also seeks to expand the Division's Cyber Incident Response Team (CIRT). Since 2018, the CIRT has assisted local governments, school districts, and non-Executive agencies through assessments as well as direct incident response support. In 2021, the CIRT responded to every request for assistance, helping more than 50 local entities. Governor's Hochul's commitment to cybersecurity in the budget will allow the CIRT to expand preventative assessments, response capabilities, and training.

The Executive Budget also allocates \$3 million for additional classroom space, a new auditorium and technological upgrades at the SPTC in Oriskany. Because of the Legislature's approval and support of prior capital funding over the last decade, the SPTC was able to add CityScope and the Swift-Water Training Facilities. This next round of upgrades will continue to keep the SPTC as a national leader in emergency response training for our State, local and national partners.

It's impossible to address all the fantastic work of the Division during this testimony, but I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Senate and Assembly today. I look forward to a continued partnership with the Legislature and will be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.