



**New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS)  
Testimony of Acting Commissioner Rossana Rosado  
Joint Legislative Hearing on FY 2022-23 Executive Budget: Public Protection  
January 25, 2022**

Good Afternoon Chairs Krueger and Weinstein, Legislative Fiscal Committee members, and other distinguished members of the Legislature. I am Rossana Rosado, Acting Commissioner of the Division of Criminal Justice Services. Thank you for the opportunity to be with you today to discuss Governor Kathy Hochul's FY 2022-2023 Budget for DCJS. Before I begin, I want to extend my heartfelt condolences to the families of the officers who were killed and wounded this past weekend, and the entire New York City Police Department. As the Governor said, we are here to fully support our City partners in any way.

While I know many of you from my previous position as Secretary of State, I wanted to share a little about myself before outlining how the Executive Budget expands the critical work of DCJS. I joined the agency eight weeks ago, after serving as Secretary of State since 2016 and chairing the State's Council on Community Re-Entry and Reintegration since 2014. I came to state service after a 30-year career in media, including as CEO of *El Diario La Prensa* – the nation's oldest and largest Spanish language newspaper. As a journalist, I heard and shared stories of society's most vulnerable. Those experiences shaped my life and inspired me to earn a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice from John Jay College and teach courses in several of New York State's prisons. Now, this leadership role at DCJS and the Governor's proposed budget provide a tremendous opportunity to positively impact the State's criminal justice system.

Later this year, DCJS will mark its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We have continued to evolve with the criminal justice system and gained invaluable experience working with all stakeholders. We know where the system has been, where it is now in a moment of change, and the vision to seize this moment to help guide it forward. That is the very mission of DCJS: to enhance public safety by providing resources and services that inform decision-making and improve the quality of the criminal justice system.

The work of talented professionals at DCJS, often in partnership with state and local colleagues, has advanced New York toward a more fair, equitable, and efficient justice system. New York is the safest large state in the country and maintains the lowest rate of incarceration. However, our work is

unfinished. Our statewide progress has not been shared across all of our neighborhoods. We know that communities of color are disproportionately affected by violence.

Just as New York's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging, so too have the persistent issues of gun violence and violent crime. Overall reported crime remains near its statewide historic low. Yet, we have seen a surge of gun violence here within our state and across the country, following the pandemic and social unrest in 2020. Preliminary data from 2021 indicate a continued decrease in overall crime and slight increase in violent crime, showing that we have not returned to a pre-pandemic state.

While last year's data are still being finalized, we estimate there will be more than 800 homicides statewide for the second consecutive year. This has not happened since 2008. This trend mirrors the nation where homicides increased by 29 percent in 2020 – the largest one-year increase on record. Alarming, more than 3 out of every 4 of those homicides involved a firearm.

In response to the continued epidemic of gun violence in 2021, Governor Hochul extended a disaster emergency, which leveraged resources and expedited funding. This allowed DCJS to administer \$8.3 million to support 129 new positions within hospitals and community-based organizations that participate in the SNUG Street Outreach networks and New York City violence interruption programs.

The Governor's proposed budget provides DCJS with more than \$100 million, primarily to address gun violence. This significant investment will allow us to provide law enforcement and communities with programs and strategies to better address the persistent problem of crime. This budget also continues our agency's evidence-based and innovative strategies that have been nationally recognized, placing New York at the forefront of public safety in the nation.

To support our law enforcement partners, DCJS will invest \$18.2 million in our Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative and \$15 million in our Crime Analysis Center (CAC) network. These investments reflect a combined increase of \$10.7 million. This funding will provide local law enforcement agencies with resources to solve gun crimes and shootings, build community trust and relationships, and expand an evidence-based community supervision model.

To support our communities, DCJS will provide over \$20 million for street outreach and violence interruption programs throughout New York. This commitment sustains emergency funding from 2021

and provides an additional \$6.1 million for gun violence prevention specialists in hospitals, SNUG programs in three new cities, wraparound social and employment services, and recruitment and retention of outreach workers. The Division will also provide \$20 million for collaborative programs in the areas hardest hit by gun violence. This funding will foster new partnerships between government and community organizations. The goal is to repair and rebuild neighborhoods by meeting the complex needs of individuals and families living in those communities.

To support the successful re-entry of justice-involved people, the Governor's proposed budget includes the Clean Slate Act, which would seal certain criminal history records after the completion of a sentence and a defined period of time: seven years for a felony and three years for a misdemeanor. The Governor also announced a new "Jails to Jobs" initiative, which includes a plan for DCJS to train Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) parole officers on a comprehensive employment curriculum to better support each person's return home and transition into the workforce.

Recognizing that recent pretrial reforms were implemented without dedicated resources from the state, the Executive Budget also provides \$10 million to support pretrial services outside of New York City. This funding, paired with existing resources, will expand the continuum of these services, including screening and assessments, supervision, case management, and information-sharing with the court system.

Finally, the proposed budget includes another round of the Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes grant program, providing up to \$25 million to safeguard New York's not-for-profit organizations at risk of hate crimes or attack.

At DCJS, public safety is paramount. We look forward to building upon our evidence-based work, strengthening police-community relationships, and enhancing the capabilities of our local partners to reduce crime and save lives.

Thank you for your support and time today. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.