

**Testimony of Superintendent Kevin P. Bruen
Before the Legislative Fiscal Committees
On the FY 2022-2023 Executive Budget
DATE: January 25, 2022.**

Thank you, Chairs KRUEGER and WEINSTEIN, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee, for the opportunity to discuss Governor Hochul's Executive Budget for the Division of State Police. I am Kevin P. Bruen, Superintendent of the New York State Police.

I want to thank the Legislature for its continued support of the New York State Police. Because of your support, State Troopers continue to uphold this agency's reputation as one of the premier law enforcement agencies in the country.

For more than 100 years, the New York State Police has consistently provided a high level of professional public service. We learn and adapt to the needs of a constantly changing society, and we strive for continuous improvement in every aspect of our work.

Our mission priorities remain improving highway safety; providing professional police services and investigative support; detecting and preventing terrorism and preparing for and responding to emergencies and disasters.

As you are aware, the majority of the appropriations made for State Police operations are in support of personnel service obligations. Most non-personnel service appropriations are non-discretionary expenditures for vehicles, equipment, facilities, and communications. These expenditures are essential for providing the tools necessary for the men and women of the State Police to fulfill their law enforcement missions.

Getting the State Police back to an adequate staffing level is a top priority. To that end, we are currently conducting an Academy class, and we expect a second, and possibly a third class later this year.

In addition, we are currently offering our Trooper Entrance Exam, and as we continue to seek the highest quality candidates, we also want to hire and retain a diverse group reflective of the communities we serve. To that end, we have made our exam more accessible by moving to a computer-based platform, making the exam available at testing centers statewide, and at military installations nationwide and internationally. We also enhanced our recruiting process and implemented a marketing plan to expand our reach into minority communities.

I know many of you reached out to your constituents on our behalf to help build awareness for the exam, and we appreciate any continued assistance you can provide.

Another top priority is addressing gun violence, and the Governor included funding in her proposed budget that would help expand our efforts to reduce the threat of gun violence across the state.

One such proposal is funding to expand our Community Stabilization Units, which partner with local law enforcement to proactively address gun violence issues with an intelligence-based approach that identifies and concentrates on the greatest threats of gun violence. We have had success since this initiative started last year, and these additional resources will allow us to assist more communities.

We also need to improve crime gun tracing so we can identify and break up illegal firearms trafficking operations. We are already working closely with our federal, state, and local partners, including the NYPD, and have had success in taking illegally possessed guns off the streets. Governor Hochul's proposal to fund a team of analysts at the New York State Intelligence Center will provide much needed additional support that would help the State Police and our partners identify, disrupt, and shut down gun trafficking operations.

Our focus on gun trafficking is already paying off – our gun seizures were up 200% last year.

Another pressing concern relates to the analysis of smart phones and other digital devices by our Computer Forensic Laboratory. The exponential increase in the lab's caseload and the complexity of devices being used to commit crimes has highlighted the need for additional resources. The Governor's proposed budget includes funding for new equipment and software and to expand our Computer Crime Unit to combat the proliferation of crimes being committed using technological means.

Highway safety remains one of our core missions, and I want to update you on our ongoing efforts to ensure highway safety following the legalization of adult use cannabis.

One part of our safety strategy involved training all Troopers in Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement – also known as ARIDE. This federally developed program provides Troopers with additional training to help identify drug and alcohol-impaired drivers, and fills the gap between the standardized field sobriety testing and specialized Drug Recognition Expert training. So far, approximately 77-percent of Troopers on the road have received ARIDE training and all Academy recruits are being instructed in ARIDE.

Our highest priority continues to be the safety of the public and our Members. With your support, the Executive Budget continues to provide Troopers with the necessary equipment, training, and other valuable resources to ensure their safety as they carry out their duties in serving and protecting the public.

Again, I am honored and exceedingly privileged to represent the nearly 6,000 dedicated men and women of the Division of State Police who serve and protect the people of this great State. They do so selflessly, with tremendous pride and at times with great personal sacrifice.

Thank you for your support for all of them, for the State Police and for the opportunity to address you this afternoon. I welcome any questions you may have.