

Remarks by NY State Troopers PBA President Thomas H. Mungeer on January 25, 2022 regarding the 2022-2023 Executive Budget

Members of the Legislature, thank you for allotting me time to present important information on behalf of all New York State Troopers as well as the citizens of this state.

My name is Thomas Mungeer, and I am honored to represent more than 7,000 active and retired Troopers and State Police Supervisors in my position as President of the New York State Troopers PBA, the labor union representing those dedicated public servants.

The NYSTPBA has historically taken a strong stance in advocating for more Troopers to be added to the New York State Police. We are referring to manpower levels of sworn members, the men and women who wear the gray uniform, patrol our highways, and respond to emergencies.

Although the proposed 2022-2023 Executive Budget does provide for new State Police Academy recruit classes, I urge that this funding not only be maintained, but also increased to help fill in staffing gaps due to the ever-increasing duties placed upon Troopers - including the worthy initiatives recently proposed by Gov. Kathy Hochul. The State Police has hired only 250 new Troopers since 2019 and as a result, our attrition rates continue to compound, bringing us to levels of depleted manpower we haven't seen in more than a decade. It takes at least 18 months to "make a Trooper," if you will, when you combine the time necessary to complete background checks, reassign training and other staff back to the Academy, undergo six months of training at the Academy, and then complete another three months of field training. It will take years for the State Police to restore the number of sworn members to appropriate levels. Simply stated, if the number of Troopers continues to decrease, there will be serious public safety issues.

With fewer Troopers on road patrol, response times are going to be slower. Here are a few questions to ponder when you think of the impact this will have on everyday situations. Will a Trooper have back-up available when faced by a weapon-wielding criminal? How long will citizens have to wait for help because not enough Troopers are on road patrol due to low staffing? Fewer Troopers on the road will endanger not only the public, but also the brave and dedicated Troopers who put their lives on the line each and every day. The reason we became New York State Troopers in the first place was because we care about the safety of you, your friends and family, and the communities across the state. Being a New York State Trooper is a very dangerous and unpredictable job, and the risks would not be worth it if we didn't feel strongly about serving and protecting the public. That's why I must speak out about the consequences of not having adequate manpower for sworn members of the New York State Police to properly do their jobs. You must ask yourselves: what price am I willing to pay for the safety of my constituents?

In addition, manpower is not the only gap in the State Police budget. Funding earmarked to replace our aging patrol fleet is vastly inadequate. To complete the aforementioned duties, we need the necessary tools to help carry out our mission, which is why our other top priority this year is the replacement of high-mileage patrol vehicles. Money authorized by the Legislature for vehicles in the past has helped ease the situation. However, replacing high-mileage patrol vehicles is a constant process. The Division of State Police attempts to replace patrol vehicles once they have been driven 125,000 miles. Recent figures show that 26% of our fleet exceeds the 125,000-mile threshold, including some cars that have more than 200,000 miles on their odometers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.