

**Department of Motor Vehicles
Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget Hearing
Testimony of Mark J.F. Schroeder, Commissioner**

January 24, 2024

Good afternoon. As a former member of the New York State Legislature, it is an honor to be with you today.

It is my privilege to serve as the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles and to lead a customer-focused organization of nearly 3,000 dedicated civil servants.

For the past five years, I have challenged the agency to reimagine our customer service model and embrace innovation to eliminate the status quo. Through that mindset and by putting our strategic plan into action, we are serving customers in record time, we have more online transactions than ever, made it easier to contact the DMV, and we are very close to updating our technology to further build on our success.

Governor Hochul's Executive Budget provides \$665 Million for DMV to implement those critical improvements and to support operations at both state- and county- run offices. This is more than offset by the approximately \$2 Billion DMV generates annually.

Thanks to the continued investment by the Governor and the

Legislature, we expect to launch a project this year to replace DMV's 50-year-old driver and registration systems with more streamlined and user-friendly technology. It will not only simplify and modernize our systems for today but will allow us to implement technology changes more easily in the future.

The transformation of our call center will also continue. Last year, we launched and then expanded live online chat and email interactions. This year, we will leverage the latest technology to make a more seamless journey whether New Yorkers visit an office, call us, or use our website.

Part of re-imagining the DMV led us to look at our offices to make sure they are right sized for the volume of customers they help and that we are being good stewards of taxpayer resources. Today, with more than 75 online transactions available, we are serving more customers from the comfort of their homes and fewer in person. In 2023, 8 million transactions were completed online. That customer benefit enabled us to consolidate our offices in Suffolk County this past August—a change that has been positive and allowed us to boost staffing in the remaining four locations in Suffolk that historically served the most customers.

We also consolidated our innovation center to a prime location on the Empire State Plaza concourse that I know many of you and your

constituents have used. We will continue to evaluate our operational footprint and explore possibilities to minimize costs, as we further move into the age of digital transactions.

DMV staff have also been at the forefront of the State's fight against surging vehicle thefts and implementing various measures of the Governor's auto theft reduction strategy. This past year alone, DMV recovered \$8.7 million worth of stolen vehicles and vehicle parts, and we worked with auto dealers and manufacturers to assist vehicle owners in preventing thefts.

At the direction of the Governor, DMV remains focused on enhancing safety and increasing enforcement surrounding stretch limousines. More than 15 arrests have been made related to illegal operation of stretch limousines because of extensive work and collaboration among DMV, DOT, and law enforcement. And I'm happy to report that many of the recommendations of the Stretch Limousine Passenger Safety Task Force, which I co-chaired, have been implemented and the ones requiring legislation have been included in a recent budget bill introduced by the Governor.

We also know that the modernization of the state's tolling system has presented challenges. DMV is working with tolling authorities to impose administrative actions against toll evaders, and we have partnered with law

enforcement to crack down on the use of illegal or defaced license plates.

Keeping our roads safe is central to the mission of both DMV and the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee, which I Chair. Together, we recently proposed a series of regulatory amendments to make it easier to remove persistently dangerous drivers from our roadways. We anticipate this rule making process to continue this year.

We recognize the transportation industry is never standing still, and we need to evolve with it to keep pace with emerging trends like the rise in e-bikes. GTSC is proactively working with NYC's Vision Zero and other partners to promote safe operation and storage of these devices.

GTSC also instituted a focused effort to enhance traffic safety engagement in communities disproportionately impacted by traffic crashes and fatalities. Specific attention was given to pedestrian, bike, and micro-mobility safety.

We are also keenly focused on increasing equity within our agency and maintaining a welcoming and diverse place for our employees, vendors, and the residents we serve. This past year, we established an office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to advance our goals. I am also thrilled to say that that more than 72 percent of our spending is done through MWBEs. And more than 20 percent is done through Service-Disabled Veteran-

Owned Businesses, which is far above the 6 percent required by law.

As part of Governor Hochul's historic 'Jails to Jobs' initiative, we also expanded a project to provide incarcerated individuals with state-issued IDs prior to their release. I am very proud to tell you that all 43 Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) facilities are now participating and more 700 non-driver IDs have been issued. This is critical to reducing recidivism—ensuring that individuals can get a job, find housing, access services, and ultimately re-enter society successfully.

Addressing the shortage of truck and bus drivers continues to be an area of focus for the DMV. At the Governor's direction, we recently implemented a federal waiver for part of the commercial driver license road test to make it easier to get perspective bus drivers licensed and ready to meet the need of our schools statewide.

DMV is also uniquely positioned to support the State's organ donor registry. More than 80 percent of potential donors join the registry through the DMV. This past year we gave New Yorkers another way to join the registry by adding that life-saving question to vehicle registration transactions.

And finally, we like to have a little fun, so I was proud to tour the state

last year to unveil new regional license plates. They are reflective of the unique landscape and history across the state and give residents a way to show their pride in their communities.

As you can see, the DMV is as diverse as the people, businesses, and entities we serve and support. Our strength is in that diversity, our willingness to adapt, and the commitment of our workforce to provide exemplary service to the people of this great state.

And it is not going unnoticed. I start every executive meeting with a reading of compliments that people have sent in to praise DMV for a job well done. So, I would like to take a minute to brag and share some of the recent comments we received.

- One New Yorker said, “The best DMV experience I have ever had.”
- Another said, “I was in and out in 15 minutes because the process was so efficient.”
- Another New Yorker, “I pulled up in the parking lot and returned to my car in ten minutes with new plates in hand.”
- And finally, “Thank you for dispelling the stereotypes about non-responsive government.”

Those comments convey exactly what we have set out to do, but our work is not done. Transforming the DMV has become part of our agency's identity—it is a mentality that our employees have embraced. It is the reason we have been so successful and the reason I am confident that we will continue to improve as we go forward.

Once again, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. I welcome any questions you might have at this time.