



**New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Public Protection
January 25, 2024**

Testimony by Commissioner Jackie Bray

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

My name is Jackie Bray. I am the Commissioner of the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services.

Since I was last here, we responded to historic flooding in the Hudson Valley and New York City, multiple cyber-attacks, life-threatening blizzard conditions in Western New York for the second year in a row, managed a water shortage in Watertown of all places, and responded to a rise in online and offline threats to vulnerable communities.

In addition, my team has been leading the state's multi-agency effort to support New York City as they manage the humanitarian crisis created by the arrival of tens of thousands of migrants.

Regardless of the emergency, we at the Division are the coordinators, the trainers, the facilitators -- the ones who ensure that our local partners have the resources they need to keep us all safe.

Thanks to the leadership of Governor Hochul, the Executive Budget provides the resources necessary for us to carry out our mission.

Our total agency appropriation in the Executive Budget is \$9 billion. As part of that appropriation, the Executive Budget includes \$10.4 million to further strengthen the State Office of Emergency Management by increasing the office's regional presence, adding to the volume and availability of planning, trainings, and tabletop exercises, and building out our analytic and geospatial capabilities.

It also includes \$15 million to supply our local and county partners with additional emergency response equipment such as generators, high-flow pumps, and temporary flood barrier equipment.

Additionally, the Executive Budget includes \$8.6 million to investigate and address the tragic rise in fatal fires, including those caused by Lithium-Ion Batteries. These dollars will: (1) allow us to launch Fire Action Teams which will focus on community risk reduction and community-based trainings to prevent deadly fires, (2) increase our investigation capacity for fatal and near-fatal fires, and (3) fund a grant program for local governments to help them increase fire prevention efforts.



Further, I want to draw your attention to the Governor's proposal to outlaw the sale of uncertified lithium-ion batteries and chargers in New York State. This builds off Senator Krueger's and Assemblyman Dinowitz's important work on the public safety hazard created by uncertified and secondhand batteries. This legislative change, along with our ongoing efforts to teach the public about how to safely use these devices, and our work to increase trainings for fire departments on how to handle these fires will be priorities for DHSES this coming year.

We must also continue to confront the diverse security threats facing us today. Most prominently is the rise in domestic violent extremism including, and especially, racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism – most lethally white supremacy. We have seen as part of that same rise, an increase in antisemitism which has accelerated this fall and winter along with a disturbing and connected rise in anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab hate.

In the immediate aftermath of May 2022's racist mass shooting in Buffalo, Governor Hochul signed Executive Order 18 which required each county and New York City to develop Domestic Terrorism Prevention Plans; and created the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Unit within DHSES. That team is working on three fronts: First, they are focused on the prevention of targeted violence of all kinds. Second, they are focused on understanding the threat of organized domestic extremist groups in New York State. Finally, they are focused on reducing the spread of mis, dis and mal information.

Since launching this effort last year, all counties have expressed their intent to create a Threat Assessment and Management team – the key tool we are deploying to increase the prevention of targeted violence. Thirty-six of the 57 counties outside of New York City have already established teams – when we launched these efforts, we had three county-based teams in New York State. In 2024, we will be expanding this work to colleges and universities.

Finally, I want to draw your attention to a part of our work that so often goes overlooked. DHSES's Office of Disaster Recovery is responsible for administering FEMA disaster funds. This year, that also means administering the at least \$14 billion worth of COVID-19 reimbursement funding that our hospitals, schools, cities, counties, and agencies have begun to, and will continue to, receive.

I'm proud of the work that's been done by our teams to keep New Yorkers safe.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Senate and Assembly today.

I am glad to answer any questions you may have on the Division or on the State's response to the influx of migrants in New York City.

Thank you.