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Written Testimony of Christopher Greene

Park Police Sergeants Director

New York State Park Police

Good afternoon, Chairpersons and members of the Legislature. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your continued commitment to the safety, preservation, and success of the New York State Park Police.

My name is Christopher Greene, and I serve as the Park Police Sergeants Director for the New York State Park Police. I appear before you today on behalf of the dedicated men and women of the New York State Park Police.

The New York State Park Police play an essential role in safeguarding more than 250 state parks and historic sites across New York, serving over 88 million visitors annually. Founded in 1885 at Niagara Falls, we are the oldest state law enforcement agency in New York and one of the most specialized and versatile police agencies in the nation.

Our members serve not only as law enforcement officers, but also as ambassadors of the State, experts in New York State Parks, community policing, emergency management, search and rescue, and the safety and security at large-scale events.

Following an executive memorandum issued in December 2019 by former Governor Andrew Cuomo, placing the Park Police under the operational control of the New York State Police, our ranks declined over the next two years to the low 160s. Since 2022, the State of New York has made significant and meaningful investments in rebuilding the New York State Park Police.

Beginning in June of 2022, through a renewed working relationship with the Executive Chamber and the support of the Legislature, the Division began to rebuild. We are grateful to the Executive Chamber and our partners for helping restore our ranks to approximately 230 members today. With a current Park Police Academy class of 37 members expected to graduate in April 2026 and complete field training by July 2026, staffing is projected to reach 267 members – exceeding 2019 staffing levels. Recruitment efforts are already underway for a potential Fall 2026 academy class that would further strengthen our ranks statewide.



These investments have revitalized the Division. Officer ranks have been replenished through recurring academy classes, and progress has been made in addressing longstanding shortages at the Sergeant and Commissioned Officer levels. The Division has expanded its emphasis on Emergency Management, filling critical positions across the state and building capacity to respond to natural disasters, major incidents, and large-scale emergencies. Command Staff has been rebuilt and strengthened under the leadership of Chief Michael Daddona, appointed Director of Law Enforcement in May 2024, and Assistant Director Colonel Mark Gridley, appointed in April 2025, bringing decades of combined law enforcement experience to the agency.

Now, it is time to protect the State's investment in the New York State Park Police and ensure its long-term success. We respectfully request two critical actions from the Legislature.

First, we ask that you begin the process of restoring operational autonomy to the New York State Park Police by transitioning away from the current operational control structure and returning to what existed prior to 2019. This would allow the Park Police Director of Law Enforcement and Command Staff to exercise full authority over the agency while continuing to work collaboratively with the New York State Police on an as needed basis. Restoring operational autonomy will improve efficiency, clarify roles, strengthen accountability, enhance morale, and better support recruitment, career development, and retention within the Park Police.

Second, we urge your continued support for retirement equity for Park Police members. The absence of a standard 20-year retirement continues to place us at a competitive disadvantage with other law enforcement agencies. Without retirement equity, the State risks losing highly trained and experienced officers to agencies offering more competitive benefits, resulting in lost institutional knowledge, wasted training costs, and impacts to public safety.

In addition, we ask the Legislature to support key budget priorities that will further strengthen the agency, including:

- A stand-alone budget for the New York State Park Police to ensure transparency and prevent the reallocation of law enforcement funds for non-law enforcement purposes;
- Increased capital funding to modernize outdated and inadequate Park Police facilities, many of which were never designed for modern policing or today's diverse workforce;
- A dedicated recruitment budget to ensure fully staffed academies and statewide outreach for qualified candidates;

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- Restoration and expansion of investigative and detective functions within the Park Police, including permanent civil service titles, training opportunities, and the ability to handle background and criminal investigations that directly impact recruitment and operations.

In 2025 alone, the New York State Park Police responded to 50,944 calls for service, including assaults, threats, domestic incidents, drug-related offenses, alcohol and drug impaired driving, rescues, and emergency responses. Our members provided staffing and security for concerts and hundreds of special events throughout the park system. Each year, the State Park system generates nearly six billion dollars in economic activity, and the safety provided by the Park Police is foundational to that success.

The men and women of the New York State Park Police are proud to serve. We are committed to protecting New York's parks, visitors, and communities, and to upholding a legacy that spans 140 years of public service. With your continued support, we can ensure that this historic agency remains strong, effective, and prepared to meet the challenges of the future.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your continued support of the New York State Park Police. I would be happy to answer any questions.