



Division of Criminal Justice Services

**New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services
Testimony of Joseph Popcun, PhD, Executive Deputy Commissioner
Joint Legislative Hearing on FY 2026-27 Executive Budget: Public Protection
Thursday, February 12, 2026**

Good Morning, Chairs Krueger and Pretlow, Legislative Fiscal Committee members, and other distinguished members of the Legislature. I am Joseph Popcun, Executive Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). On behalf of Commissioner Rossana Rosado and the entire DCJS team, thank you for the opportunity to discuss Governor Kathy Hochul's FY 2026-2027 Budget for DCJS.

Over the past year, I began wearing a smartwatch, first out of curiosity and then as a habit to track my health. At times, the amount of data it tracks felt overwhelming or it seemed different from what I was feeling. Yet I knew it was still important to track – and act – on what could be measured and improved.

Similarly, DCJS collects and compiles a tremendous amount of data – from reported crime and shootings to arraignments and dispositions. Through these efforts, a clear picture of the state's public safety landscape has emerged: shooting incidents with injury have reached record lows, violent crime is decreasing, and the criminal justice system has largely recovered from pandemic-era disruptions.

This progress, however, was neither guaranteed nor did it happen in a silo. These improvements stemmed from Governor Hochul's commitment to public safety. From record investments supported by the State Legislature to groundbreaking initiatives, the Governor has provided state and local agencies and organizations with tools, training, and support to build safer and stronger neighborhoods. She has balanced intervention with prevention, and enforcement with empowerment.

For DCJS, this approach involves co-creating safety between law enforcement and the public they serve, recognizing that lasting safety cannot simply be imposed. It must be built from within by working together with, and empowering, communities to foster positive change. What this looks like in practice is law enforcement and residents standing side by side, each bringing their knowledge and expertise to create prosperous neighborhoods and thriving families. From gun and domestic violence to motor vehicle and retail theft, this approach is working.

In 2025, there were 1,943 fewer people shot, and 308 fewer people killed by shootings than just four years ago. Statewide, preliminary reported crime is trending down eight percent last year compared to 2024. New York State is seeing decreases in every single crime category, with double-digit declines in murder, robbery, burglary, and motor vehicle theft. The progress outside of New York City is even more pronounced with violent crime not only at pre-pandemic levels but reaching its lowest level in decades. Altogether, New York State remains one of the safest large states in the country with the lowest homicide rate among them.

In part, these results reflect DCJS' sustained resources for, and relationships with, local partners doing this important work. On the community side, initiatives like Project RISE (Respond, Invest, Sustain, Empower) in 10 cities, the SNUG street outreach, social work, and hospital response program in 14 communities, and STRIVE (Statewide Targeted Reductions in Intimate Partner Violence) in 17 counties and New York City are bringing resources directly to neighborhoods and families most affected by violence. On the law enforcement side, our GIVE (Gun Involved Violence Elimination) initiative in 21 counties and network of 11 Crime Analysis Centers have built a nation-leading policing infrastructure to reduce and solve crimes. Finally, our growing portfolio of County Re-Entry Task Forces and ATI (Alternatives to Incarceration) programs are tackling the root causes and consequences of crime by connecting people with the support they need.

The Governor's commitment to these programs continues in the FY 2026-2027 Executive Budget and extends to several new proposals to keep New Yorkers safe, including:

Completing Statewide Coverage of the Crime Analysis Center Network by Expanding to Westchester County

Our nationally recognized network is a critical tool for law enforcement, supporting investigations, strengthening prosecutions, and improving coordination among more than 400 law enforcement agencies. The Executive Budget includes \$4.5 million for DCJS to create a new center in Westchester County and expand crime analysis capabilities.

Funding the Successful Law Enforcement Technology (LETECH) Grant Program

In 2024, DCJS awarded more than \$127 million to 378 police departments and sheriffs' offices for technology and equipment, such as license plate readers, fixed and mobile cameras, and officer and patrol vehicle equipment. The Executive Budget includes \$50 million to continue this program, supporting agencies in acquiring critical technologies to enhance crime prevention and community engagement.

Investing in Crime Labs to Solve Crimes

Timely and reliable forensic analysis is critical to delivering justice for victims and holding people who commit crimes accountable. The Executive Budget includes \$6.7 million to modernize public forensic crime laboratories across the state, allowing them to upgrade technology for advanced DNA and digital evidence analysis and expand forensic staffing. By improving the speed and reliability of forensic work and strengthening statewide monitoring, the State will help ensure cases move forward efficiently and effectively.

Improving Police Training by Strengthening Academies

While New York State sets minimum training requirements for police officers, those officers are trained through a decentralized system of nearly three dozen local academies that vary in instructional methods, teaching quality, and learning environment. The Executive Budget includes resources to strengthen police training by developing a voluntary accreditation program to ensure access to consistent information about best practices and learning approaches that will support high-quality instruction for police officers.

Stopping Illegal Guns by Cracking Down on 3-D-Printed Firearms and DIY Machine Guns

The Executive Budget includes legislation requiring minimum safety standards for 3-D printers sold in New York, ensuring they are equipped with technology that prevents the unlicensed, illegal production of firearms. The budget also includes legislation to require all pistols sold in the state to be designed so they cannot quickly and easily be converted into machine guns.

Combating Hate Crimes by Protecting At-Risk Community Partners

Since 2021, Governor Hochul has secured nearly \$200 million for more than 2,000 security projects through the Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes grant program. Administered by DCJS, this program has continually evolved to meet the needs of community-based organizations at risk of hate crimes or attack. The Executive Budget includes \$35 million to continue this critical program.

Prioritizing Subway Safety by Funding Police Patrols on Trains and Platforms

In 2025, there were almost 1.3 billion trips in the subway system, up 7 percent from 2024 and near pre-pandemic ridership. At the same time, subway crime fell to its lowest level in 16 years. To sustain this progress, the Executive Budget continues a \$77 million investment to increase the New York City Police Department presence on trains and platforms.

Just as my smartwatch has helped me track progress and make better informed decisions about my health, the data DCJS collects informs our decisions and tells a powerful story about public safety in New York State. Yet data alone does not change lives – action does. This year’s Executive Budget is that action. With your support, it will allow DCJS to continue programs that are working and delivering what New Yorkers expect: stronger partnerships, safer neighborhoods, and a fair and equal justice system built on trust and accountability for all.

Working together, we can achieve a New York where every community – rich and poor, urban and rural, upstate and downstate – shares in our public safety progress. Where safety is not just measured in statistics, but felt on our streets. This budget – rooted in Governor Hochul’s unwavering focus on public safety – moves us closer toward that New York State.

Before I close, I want to recognize the thousands of on-the-ground partners – residents and leaders, community providers, police, prosecutors, defenders, judges, community supervision professionals, and many more – who are working every day to change lives. I also want to thank Commissioner Rosado for her exceptional leadership of this agency and the talented DCJS team who bring dedication and innovation to the agency’s mission every day.

Finally, our work is only possible because of the ongoing support we receive from the State Legislature and its members who represent every corner of this Great State. Thank you for your service and your time today. I look forward to answering any of your questions.