



New York State Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services

**Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Public Protection
February 12, 2026**

**Testimony by
Acting Commissioner Terence O’Leary**

Good morning. Thank you, Chair Krueger, Chair Pretlow, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee. I would also like to thank the Chair of the Senate Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee, Senator Scarcella-Spanton, and the Chair of the Assembly Governmental Operations Committee, Assembly Member McDonald, for their continued partnership.

My name is Terry O’Leary. I am the Acting Commissioner of the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the Fiscal Year ‘27 Executive Budget proposal and the great work of the Division’s staff. This budget reflects Governor Hochul’s strong commitment to protecting the safety and security of New Yorkers as threats such as climate change and extremism continue while federal support for these efforts are being paused, pulled back, or in some cases, disappearing.

This year’s Executive Budget proposes \$201.9 million in state operating funds for the Division, \$157.6 million in capital funding and \$8.9 billion in aid to localities, for a total budget of \$9.2 billion. These resources will build upon the Division’s prior efforts and help ensure New York is prepared for, and can respond to and recover from, disasters and emergencies that impact New York State.



As the intensity and diversity of threats continue to increase, it's critical that first responders statewide have access to modern, best-in-class training, which is a core mission of the Division.

Last year, there were nearly 58,000 completions of firefighter and emergency responder training conducted by the State's Office of Fire Prevention and Control on topics ranging from basic firefighter operations to advanced technical rescue. We have added courses to meet the evolving needs of the fire service, such as lithium-ion battery safety, and have made our courses more easily accessible through online offerings and alternative schedules. In addition, we continue to administer the Volunteer Firefighter Training Stipend Program, to assist the recruitment and retention efforts of fire departments throughout the state. Since the Program's inception, more than 4,000 volunteer firefighters have received stipends for completing critical firefighter training courses, and we've seen a 20 percent increase in Basic and Interior firefighting course completions and a 35 percent increase in Fire Officer 1 completions.

The Division's State Preparedness Training Center in Oriskany is one of the nation's premier first responder training facilities. Last year, more than 7,000 individuals were trained at the SPTC, while another 2,100 received training regionally through our Office of Training. The capabilities of this facility to provide real-world, immersive training are second to none and I would like to offer you the opportunity to visit.

Our training efforts do not stop there -- our Office of Emergency Management also provided training to 9,300 emergency management professionals in 2025, and our Office of Counter Terrorism delivered training to another 12,500 individuals in domestic terrorism and targeted violence prevention, physical security, and cyber security.



Much of OCT's training was focused on protecting against cyber-attacks which continue to threaten local governments, school districts and other authorities statewide. More than 6,300 state and local government professionals received anti-phishing trainings last year and Cyber Capability workshops were held for more than 4,100 state and local government leaders. Additionally, 13 separate tabletop exercises and 16 rapid cyber risk assessments were completed as part of our training and assistance of our local partners.

It's also critical that our first responders have access to the resources and support they need to address the ever-growing list of challenges our communities face. Governor Hochul has put forth two key initiatives in 2026 to help us meet this goal.

First, with your support, New York will seek to join the Northern Emergency Management Assistance Compact and the International Emergency Assistance Compact, enabling mutual aid assistance with our Canadian neighbors, including the bordering provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

While New York has the ability to receive emergency mutual aid from other states, we do not presently have the ability to seek or provide the same assistance from nearby Canadian provinces, even when those resources are closer and faster to deploy. By joining these compacts, the State will have the ability to share and receive critical resources across the Canadian border during times of an emergency.

Additionally, thanks to Governor Hochul's leadership, we are seeking \$4.6 million to expand our Statewide Urban Search and Rescue program.



Homeland Security and Emergency Services

As extreme weather intensifies, communities are routinely faced with threats including floods, structural collapses, and other complex rescue situations. This proposal will enable the Division to equip and partner with specialized local first responders, bolstering our collective ability to quickly deploy and sustain large-scale rescue operations. It will build capacity statewide, improve response times and better protect lives during emergencies.

Each year, the Division, through our Office of Disaster Recovery Programs and our Office of Administration and Finance, administers billions of dollars of federal funding that local communities rely upon to build, sustain, and deliver the capabilities necessary to prepare for and respond to catastrophic events, such as terrorist attacks and natural disasters – this funding is also critical for the recovery and rebuilding in the aftermath of a disaster.

However, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security turned its back on all New Yorkers when it attempted to cut hundreds of millions of dollars in critical counterterrorism funding. This has been compounded by the fact that billions of dollars in disaster recovery funding remain inexplicably stalled.

As federal cuts, delays and seemingly haphazard policy decisions threaten the ability of the State and our local partners to keep New York communities safe, I want to commend the dedicated public servants at the Division who work diligently every day to navigate the challenges and obstacles now necessary to access the critical funding the State and localities deserve.

Finally, I believe it's essential to raise one final issue – the chaos and violence we have seen take place across this country, resulting from the federal government's misguided approach to civil immigration



Homeland Security and Emergency Services

enforcement. While the Division does not have a role in immigration enforcement, the core of our mission is to help ensure the public's safety, and public safety is strongest when community trust is protected. Therefore, it is crucial that law enforcement resources are directed toward serious criminal threats and clear legal boundaries are established and maintained.

To that end, Governor Hochul has proposed three common sense solutions to address these challenges: prohibiting 287(g) agreements, codifying sensitive locations where civil immigration arrests may not occur, and providing mechanisms for individuals to hold federal agents accountable when they violate a person's civil rights. Together, these measures reinforce appropriate roles and responsibilities: local law enforcement remains focused on addressing local crime, while federal authorities carry out their federal civil functions. While those roles may intersect in criminal matters, civil immigration enforcement is not, and should not be, the responsibility of state or local agencies. The Division stands ready to help support these initiatives however we can.

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

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Senate and Assembly and want to thank you for your ongoing support, which allows the Division to continue our important work.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.