Testimony of Commissioner Rossana Rosado
Assembly Standing Committees on Consumer Affairs and Protection, Governmental Operations, and Local Governments
Public Hearing on Automated License Plate Reader Systems (ALPRs)
Monday, November 9, 2026

Dear Chair Rozic, Chair McDonald, Chair Solages, and distinguished members of the Assembly Standing Committees on Consumer Affairs and Protection, Governmental Operations, and Local Governments, thank you for inviting the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to provide testimony on how automated license plate readers (ALPRs) are being used in New York State, what data they collect, and how that data is used and shared.

My top priority as DCJS Commissioner is to keep New Yorkers safe and ensure a justice system that works for all. I am unable to attend today's public hearing, but I'm grateful for the opportunity to submit written testimony detailing how DCJS has informed law enforcement's use of ALPRs through a statewide model policy, and the ways in which the Division oversees their use by the State's nationally-recognized network of Crime Analysis Centers.

ALPRs are a widely used investigative tool for law enforcement agencies in New York and across the nation, and public interest in how these systems are used, who can access the data they collect, and with whom that data is shared has grown with their use. As your legislative hearing reflects, New Yorkers rightly expect that the technology used to protect them will be accessed only by authorized and trained personnel for legitimate purposes and with accountability. We share that expectation, rooted in the idea that public safety and privacy are not mutually exclusive. Both are achievable when technology is paired with clear rules, consistent oversight, and a commitment to civil liberties.

This testimony describes the Division's role with respect to law enforcement use of ALPRs: (1) the model policy that the Municipal Police Training Council (MPTC) developed to inform the field, (2) the policies that govern ALPR use within the CAC network, and (3) how ALPRs are supported and used by local law enforcement agencies using State resources. The use of ALPRs by private businesses and other non-law enforcement entities falls outside of the responsibilities of DCJS and is not addressed here.

Understanding License Plate Reader Technology

An ALPR uses one or more cameras and optical character recognition software to read license plates of vehicles in public view. ALPRs may be mounted at fixed locations, such as poles or traffic signals, or on patrol vehicles. Each capture, or "read," consists of a digital image of the license plate, vehicle and associated information, such as the date, time, and location of the capture.

Law enforcement agencies use ALPR data primarily in two ways. First, reads may be compared against "hotlists," which include license plates associated with crimes under investigation, stolen vehicles, stolen plates, wanted persons, suspended or revoked registrations, and those associated with AMBER Alerts, Missing Child and Vulnerable Adult

Alerts. When a passing vehicle's license plate matches a hotlist entry, the system can alert a police officer or other authorized personnel that the associated vehicle has passed a particular ALPR location. Second, trained and authorized personnel may search stored reads to help identify or locate a vehicle connected to a specific investigation, such as a vehicle seen leaving the scene of a shooting.

The Municipal Police Training Council License Plate Reader Model Policy

The Municipal Police Training Council (MPTC), an independent, statutorily authorized entity that DCJS supports, approved the current version of the License Plate Reader Model Policy in June 2022. The MPTC consulted with the New York State Association of Chiefs of Police, the New York State Police, the New York City Police Department, the New York State Sheriffs' Association, and the New York State Archives to create the policy, which is available to every law enforcement agency in the state as a resource when developing or updating their own policies.

The model policy provides guidance to law enforcement agencies in developing written policies and procedures on the use of license plate reader technology, promoting public safety and the efficiency of criminal investigations while also ensuring that appropriate safeguards are in place to protect the privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties of individuals. The policy is intended to allow for the individual needs of police agencies regardless of size or resource limitations. Police agencies are encouraged to customize it to meet their needs while being mindful of its intent.

Under the model policy, license plate reader technology should be used in a manner that protects civil rights and civil liberties, including those guaranteed by the United States Constitution, and shall only be used to scan the license plates of vehicles exposed to public view. The policy sets out the following specific standards, including:

- **Permissible uses.** ALPRs are authorized only for official public safety purposes: to attempt to identify or locate a vehicle related to an investigation; to attempt to identify a vehicle's owner or occupants who have committed a criminal offense, are involved in or planning criminal conduct or activity, or may be a missing person, crime victim, or witness to criminal activity; to prevent, detect, or assess potential safety threats to members of the public or public officials; to identify vehicles with suspended or revoked registrations during routine patrol; to regulate public parking areas; and to monitor access to secured areas.
- **Prohibited uses.** Use of this technology for personal or other non-official purposes is a violation of the policy. This technology cannot be used for investigatory purposes when the request for identification is based solely upon religious, political, or social views or activities, or upon participation in a non-criminal organization or lawful event.
- **Hotlist verification.** Officers should ensure that the most current hotlist data available is uploaded. When an ALPR indicates a hotlist hit, the officer must verify, before initiating any stop, that the captured plate image matches the plate number and state of registration of the vehicle, and all stops must be constitutionally valid.
- **Documented searches.** Every inquiry must document the reason for the search, a case or incident number, and the identity of the authorized inquirer. Query logs must be securely maintained for six years for audit purposes, in accordance with the State Archives' retention and disposition schedule.
- **Controlled sharing.** ALPR data is for official use only and shall be shared only for legitimate law enforcement purposes. It may be disseminated to another law enforcement agency or official with a need to know the information in the performance of

official duties, for authorized use, and subject to all federal and state laws on privacy, confidentiality, and dissemination. When data is disseminated outside the agency, the reason and the identity of the requesting person or agency must be documented.

- **Retention and disclosure.** Plate reads are retained in accordance with the State Archives retention and disposition schedule. Data with investigative or prosecutorial value is archived in accordance with applicable statutory timeframes; otherwise, data may be destroyed under the agency's retention procedures with the approval of its administrator. Any disclosure must be consistent with the agency's records release policy and applicable law, including evidence discovery and the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL), and requests should be reviewed by the agency's legal advisor.
- **Administration and audits.** Each agency designates an administrator responsible for maintaining its ALPR data, search requests, and hotlists; keeping a list of active authorized users; and ensuring that a vendor does not add users without coordinating with the agency. Agencies must institute procedures to monitor ALPR use and measure compliance with the policy, including periodic and random audits or inspections.
- **Training.** Personnel with access to ALPR data must, at a minimum, have received training on how to use the technology, the agency's ALPR policy and procedures, and applicable laws and privacy protections, with in-service training or training bulletins as hardware, software, laws, or the agency's policy change.

Oversight of ALPR Use Within the Crime Analysis Center Network

DCJS funds and supports 11 Crime Analysis Centers (CACs) statewide in partnership with local law enforcement agencies. The CAC Network has been nationally recognized, with DCJS receiving an Excellence in the Field of Criminal Justice Award from the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) in 2024. The Division was one of only two recipients of BJA's Reducing Violent Crime Award. The CACs only support criminal investigations, working directly with an investigating law enforcement agency and linking to that agency's case or incident number. They do not support civil matters, including civil immigration enforcement.

Crime analysts, investigators, and other personnel who staff these centers provide investigative support to police and prosecutors from identifying crime patterns to real-time support during active investigations. ALPR data is one of many resources they use in the course of their work, and the CAC Network has had a written policy, which is periodically updated, governing their use since 2013. Most recently the policy was revised in 2025, building on the same framework as the MPTC model policy and adding controls specific to the CACs:

- **Restricted access and training.** Access is limited to authorized sworn members of law enforcement agencies, their agency-authorized civilian analysts, and CAC crime analysts. Every user must complete a Confidentiality of Information course, sign a confidentiality agreement, and be trained in the system, the policy, and applicable laws and privacy protections.
- **Case-based searches.** Every ALPR inquiry received by a CAC must document the reason for the search, the requesting agency's case or incident number, and the identity of the authorized requester.
- **Strictly governed hotlists.** A plate may be entered only in support of a law enforcement agency's criminal investigation, with the agency case number recorded. Hotlist entries expire after 14 days unless renewed and must be removed as soon as a vehicle is no longer an investigative target.

- **Data ownership.** ALPR data belongs to the agency that collects it. The CACs may access it only with that agency's authorization, may share it only with criminal justice agencies for legitimate law enforcement purposes, and will not release it to any non-law enforcement party.

The CAC Network policy also requires regular reviews of user access and searches, with any misuse documented and referred for follow-up investigation and potential action. These policies expressly govern how CAC personnel access and use ALPR data. It is important to note that agencies owning ALPR technology and the data collected are ultimately responsible for the policies and controls that govern their systems.

State Support for Local Law Enforcement Use of ALPRs

Local law enforcement agencies in New York State have used ALPRs for nearly two decades, acquiring them through local, state, and federal funds.

DCJS currently administers the Law Enforcement Technology (LETECH) grant program for police departments and sheriffs' offices outside of New York City. License plate readers are one of many eligible items through the program, alongside body-worn cameras, gunshot detection systems, drones, crime scene scanners, lifesaving equipment, and patrol vehicle equipment. Each agency determines – and applies for – which eligible tools best meet the needs of its community. Upon receiving grant awards, agencies select vendors under their own procurement rules and obtain local permission to install cameras and use those vendors. The first round of LETECH funding awarded in May 2024 totaled $127 million to 378 police departments and sheriffs' offices. Approximately 22 percent of that funding was allocated to license plate readers, 20 percent for body-worn and patrol vehicle equipment and 17 percent for public safety camera systems.

This summer, DCJS issued a request for applications making an additional $75 million available through the LETECH program with clear conditions:

- Every applicant must attest to compliance with Executive Law Section 170-k, enacted in 2026 as part of the *Local Cops, Local Crimes Act*, which requires local police agencies to prioritize local criminal enforcement and limit civil immigration enforcement.
- Agencies operating 287(g) or similar agreements that would support the use of state and local resources for civil immigration enforcement are not eligible for funding.
- No data or information generated by technology purchased with these funds may be used for civil immigration enforcement purposes.

The RFA also requires each grantee to work with its local CAC to develop a plan to integrate relevant data from ALPR data, and any other LETECH funded technology, into the CAC network, which brings CAC use of that data under the network's policies. DCJS is scoring applications for this second round of LETECH funding and expects to issue awards before the end of the year.

How ALPRs Help Solve Crimes and Protect New Yorkers

Between January 2024 and May 2026, CAC staff documented more than 400 case successes in which ALPR data contributed valuable information to investigations conducted by law enforcement agencies across the state, including:

- **Hit-and-run crashes.** When a driver flees a serious or fatal crash, investigators may have only a partial description of the vehicle. ALPR data can help analysts identify vehicles matching that description that traveled toward and away from the scene.
- **Missing and vulnerable people.** When a child or vulnerable adult goes missing, a vehicle associated with the search can be placed on a hotlist so that officers are alerted if it passes a reader, and recent reads can help investigators reconstruct its route.
- **Shootings and other violent crimes.** Video of a shooting, robbery, or carjacking often captures a vehicle. ALPR data can help investigators connect that vehicle to a plate and registration, generating leads that are then developed through other investigative work.
- **Clearing the innocent.** ALPR data often points investigators away from people who are not involved, for example by showing that a vehicle seen near a crime was elsewhere at the critical time, or that it was present, but played no role.

In each case, ALPR data is only one piece of the investigation, used alongside video evidence, interviews, other investigative tools, and the judgment of trained analysts and officers.

ALPRs Within New York's Public Safety Ecosystem

Investigations aided by ALPRs and other technology are part of a comprehensive public safety strategy that has contributed to a safer New York. Since taking office, Governor Kathy Hochul has invested $4 billion in public safety initiatives ranging from gun violence prevention to subway safety. These investments have contributed to:

- an 8 percent reduction in reported crime from 2024 to 2025 and a 7 percent decline in the first five months of 2026;
- the lowest January-to-May murder total since at least 2017, less than half the 2021 level;
- a 58 percent decline in shooting incidents with injury from 2021 to 2025, with nearly 2,000 fewer people shot; and
- New York reaching the lowest homicide rate among the nation's ten most populous states.

This tremendous progress reflects sustained state investment in prevention, intervention, and enforcement. It also relies on significant partnerships among police, prosecutors, community supervision professionals, analysts, and community providers, among many others devoted to co-creating safety within their community.

In sum, ALPRs are one of many tools within the public safety ecosystem of New York State. While they have proven to be a high-value investigative tool for law enforcement agencies, their value depends on appropriate use with strict internal controls and accountability. The MPTC model policy has informed the field on these practices, and through its own policies, the DCJS CAC Network adheres to them. My team looks forward to continuing to work with our law enforcement partners to ensure that ALPRs are used responsibly.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office with any questions on this important issue. Thank you for your continued support of DCJS and our shared mission to build safer and stronger communities.