



**New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services
Testimony of Commissioner Rossana Rosado
Joint Legislative Hearing on FY 2024-25 Executive Budget: Public Protection
Thursday, January 25, 2024**

Good Afternoon Chairs Krueger and Weinstein, Legislative Fiscal Committee members, and other distinguished members of the Legislature. I am Rossana Rosado, Commissioner of the Division of Criminal Justice Services. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss Governor Hochul's FY 2024-25 Budget for DCJS – a budget that puts community safety and justice first.

With the combined support of the Governor and the Legislature, DCJS continues its work to build safe and strong communities throughout New York. As a multi-function support agency, we advance all aspects of the state's criminal justice system – from preventing crime to assisting justice-involved people as they return home. I am proud to represent more than 400 employees who help our law enforcement and community partners keep New Yorkers safe and ensure a justice system that works for all.

The challenges of the past few years have kept the country, and us all, in crisis – the pandemic, social unrest, violent extremism, and a surge in shootings, to name a few. We found our footing by doubling our efforts to stop the cycle of violence and stabilize neighborhoods. Today, I am pleased to share that these efforts are working. We are using this moment to develop new approaches and innovations – that are preventive – to make our state safer and our communities whole.

Since 2021, the agency's budget has grown to be the largest in our 52-year history – a more than \$500 million increase. We have used this funding to (1) better support our local partners and (2) expand our evidence-informed programs that tackle the causes and consequences of crime. To guarantee that these investments reached the people and places most in need, I toured 20 communities, met with public safety and community leaders, and heard about their local programs and unmet needs. In several communities, this was the first time they had been brought together by a state agency to discuss what was working, what wasn't working, and what support was needed to provide more opportunities to thrive.

At every stop, we discussed recruitment and retention challenges, pandemic disruptions, justice reform implementation, and growing needs among justice-involved individuals. This outreach strengthened existing partnerships, fostered new ones, and guided our funding to prosecutors, public defenders, police, probation, and community groups. Our investments addressed changes in the public safety field and brought many of our priority programs to scale, including:

- The *Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative* now in 21 counties to help law enforcement agencies adopt evidence-based strategies to drive down crime,
- The *Crime Analysis Center network* with 11 centers serving 49 counties and more than 350 agencies with dedicated intelligence and investigative assistance,
- The *SNUG outreach program* in 14 communities leveraging more than 200 credible messengers and social workers to interrupt the cycle of violence,
- The *Project RISE* community engagement in 7 cities with 99 organizations providing 50 new services to promote safety and expand youth opportunities,
- The *County Re-Entry Task Forces* in 20 counties to support the needs of people returning to the community from prison and foster successful reintegration, and, finally,
- The *Alternatives to Incarceration portfolio* of 55 programs that deliver services and treatment for people who can be safely diverted from the justice system.

Together, these efforts have made a difference.

Our comprehensive approach has curbed the pandemic-era surge in violence – and we are well-positioned to use similar collaborations to curtail the rise in property crime. Last year, shootings were 24 percent lower than 2022 – and 36 percent lower than their 2021 peak. This means there were 1,013 fewer shootings and 198 fewer people killed by gun violence throughout New York.

Through the first nine months of 2023, reported crime throughout most of New York State returned to pre-pandemic levels as seen in 2017 and 2018. In terms of trends, violent crime decreased; however, property crimes increased. Outside New York City, violent crime dropped 5 percent and violent crime involving firearms dropped 13 percent, yet property crime was up 5 percent through September 2023. New York City's initial crime reporting shows similar changes.

To further the fight against crime and victimization in 2024, Governor Hochul has prioritized the expansion of domestic violence interventions and targeted enforcement of organized retail theft and property crime. The proposed budget provides DCJS with:

- More than \$35 million to enhance police and prosecution efforts to combat domestic violence where it is most prevalent. We have long supported these types of focused strategies. In partnership with the National Network for Safe Communities at John Jay College, the City of Kingston addressed intimate partner violence through GIVE

and successfully reduced the recidivism rate of domestic abuse by more than half. This nation-leading investment will allow partner agencies to use comprehensive strategies to save lives and hold abusers accountable; this budget also includes,

- \$15 million to combat organized retail theft through crime analysis and information-sharing with district attorneys' offices and police departments. This collaboration will build upon the crime intelligence resources that New York has developed in the last 15 years – and will forge new relationships with businesses to identify theft trends and help authorities solve these crimes.

Finally, I join you and the Governor in rejecting all forms of hate in our state. DCJS administers the *Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes* grant program to protect nonprofit organizations at risk of hate crimes. Through this program, we have provided nearly \$68 million to fund more than 1,400 security projects since 2021. We also just released a new request for applications that is posted on our website, which will provide another round of funding to secure these community institutions.

This Executive Budget will allow DCJS to continue to deliver the training, tools, and technical assistance needed by our local partners. It will build upon our solutions to keep neighborhoods safe – and it will promote trust and confidence in our justice system. To me, it also allows us to be proactive and serve the changing needs of our communities. To quote a former police commissioner, “we need to be able to watch the grill and water the flowers at the same time” – and this budget does that for DCJS.

I want to thank Governor Hochul for her outstanding leadership on public safety. I also want to recognize the exceptional DCJS team who make this work possible, bringing humanity and a holistic focus to justice and safety. This team has gone above-and-beyond to develop an award-winning work community and culture where people are valued.

Thank you for your steadfast support and your time today. I look forward to answering any of your questions.