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FY 2015-2016 Budget Testimony
Division of Criminal Justice Services
February 26, 2015

Good morning Chairman DeFrancisco, Chairman Farrell and distinguished members of the legislature. I am Mike Green, Executive Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Criminal Justice Services. Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today.

Governor Cuomo's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2015-2016 builds on the success of the last four years, continues our fiscal discipline and expands our commitment to accountability and results. This budget will allow DCJS to continue to meet its mission to enhance public safety and improve criminal justice.

During the last four years, crime in New York State has remained at historically low levels, with reported murders declining more than 17 percent between 2010 and 2013. Additional reductions are expected when data are finalized for 2014. The FBI statistics show that New York continues to be the safest large state in the nation, and the fourth safest state overall. At the same time, New York's prison population has declined steadily since 1999, from a high of more than 72,000 inmates to a current population of approximately 53,000. Notably, New York has the lowest imprisonment rate of any large state.

The GIVE Initiative

New York State began its Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative in July 2014, focusing on using proven strategies to reduce shootings and save lives in 17 counties that collectively report 87 percent of the violent crime outside of New York City.

In addition to providing more than \$13.2 million in funding to law enforcement partners in those counties, the GIVE initiative provides all participating agencies with training and technical assistance so they have the knowledge necessary to implement programs that have been proven to be effective. For example, more than 270 law enforcement professionals from GIVE agencies attended the State's first-ever evidence-based policing symposium, where they heard national experts detail proven strategies.

We are providing our funded partners with the best quality training and assistance available – all at no cost – so they have the knowledge and tools to succeed. Participating agencies have embraced these added benefits and have begun to implement these strategies.

Recognizing that law enforcement agencies cannot reduce gun violence on their own, GIVE promotes community engagement. DCJS has worked to foster collaboration among GIVE agencies and SNUG street outreach worker programs.

Procedural justice, which centers on the concept of fairness, is another key component to GIVE and is a topic that DCJS focused on throughout 2014 as we implemented the initiative. Law enforcement efforts that are fair, and perceived by the community as being fair, undeniably foster trust and respect from the community and result in safer communities.

Through GIVE, we are committed to helping our law enforcement partners build bridges with the communities they serve. The Governor's budget proposal preserves GIVE funding at the same level as the current budget.

In addition to investing in programs designed to reduce crime, we also are strengthening our community-based alternative to incarceration (ATI) network. We have implemented a fidelity and evaluation system and are providing training and technical assistance to the providers we fund.

Restoring Trust Between the Community and Law Enforcement

In his State of the State message, Governor Cuomo proposed a comprehensive package of reforms to restore trust between the community and law enforcement.

The proposal includes a process for the Governor to appoint an independent monitor and potentially, a special prosecutor where an unarmed civilian dies as a result of an encounter with police and the case is not presented to a grand jury, or a grand jury does not indict.

Enact Comprehensive Reforms to Raise the Age

While New York State's juvenile justice system has undergone significant transformational steps under Governor Cuomo's leadership, there is one critical area where New York has lagged behind. All 16- and 17-year-olds who are arrested are currently processed in the adult criminal justice system, regardless of their offense. Only North Carolina and New York draw this line of criminal responsibility at age 16.

Last month, the Governor's Commission on Youth, Public Safety and Justice released a comprehensive set of recommendations that were fully embraced by the Governor. His proposal raises the age of criminal responsibility to 18 by phasing in juvenile jurisdiction for 16-year-olds in 2017 and 17-year-olds in 2018.

The Executive proposal is carefully designed to preserve public safety by maintaining District Attorney control over serious crimes of violence, allowing for violent felony offenses given Youthful Offender status to be considered in subsequent sentencing for a violent felony offenses and providing for the capacity to impose adult sentences for certain of the most egregious crimes of violence.

We all should be proud of the tremendous strides that New York State has made over the past quarter-century to enhance the safety and security of its residents.

The Governor's budget is designed to continue the progress we have made. But perhaps more importantly, it will allow us to continue to support innovative programs and proven strategies in communities where gun violence takes too many young lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.