

2023-2024 BUDGET REQUEST
PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE

STATEMENT TO HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE

MARCH 27, 2023



Good morning, Chairmen Harris and Grove and members of the House Appropriations Committee. I am Colonel Christopher Paris, Commissioner of the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP).

With me today are the Acting Deputy Commissioner of Operations, Major George Bivens; the Acting Deputy Commissioner of Administration and Professional Responsibility, Major Wayne Kline; the Acting Deputy Commissioner of Staff, Major Joanne Reed; and the Special Assistant to the Commissioner, Ms. Brooke Meade.

We are appreciative of Governor Shapiro, his staff, and members of the General Assembly for their unwavering commitment to public safety and PSP operations.

Furthermore, we would like to thank the citizens of Pennsylvania for their unyielding support of the PSP.

The PSP has jurisdiction in all political subdivisions within the Commonwealth and provides full-time or part-time police service to approximately 67 percent of the Commonwealth's municipalities, 61 percent of the Commonwealth's roadways, and 81 percent of the Commonwealth's total land area. In 2022, PSP Troopers investigated 76,312 crashes and made 19,563 arrests for Driving Under the Influence. Additionally, PSP's commitment to highway safety was demonstrated by the 68,856 commercial motor vehicle inspections conducted statewide and the issuance of 460,485 traffic citations for violations such as those related to distracted driving and speeding.

PSP continues to deliver specialized services to all municipal police agencies at no cost to the municipalities. Our Computer Crime Unit is dedicated to the investigation of crimes such as child exploitation and identity theft. The Computer Crime Unit conducts the forensic analysis of digital evidence submitted by many federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. Our Bureau of Forensic Services provides drug identification, DNA analysis, and latent fingerprint examination to the same entities at PSP's seven regional crime laboratories.

PSP continues to experience increased demands for our services. Requests for our Special Emergency Response Team (SERT) have increased 98% since 2017. PSP aviation assets continue to provide invaluable

assistance to PSP and other agencies in furtherance of criminal investigations, search and rescue, and recovery efforts. The Governor's budget proposal includes \$4.6 million to begin refreshing our aging aviation fleet which currently includes two fixed wing aircraft and six helicopters. The 18 full-time and 15 alternate Troopers assigned to the Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team have conducted 429 assessments in 2022 to help make Pennsylvania schools and places of worship safer. In an effort to address gun violence, PSP has partnered with local officials in areas including Chester, Aliquippa, Philadelphia, and Harrisburg to focus on removing illegally possessed firearms from communities. The Office of Community Engagement was created to address barriers, ease tensions, contribute to community events, and complement recruitment efforts.

Over the past year, PSP has moved forward with new initiatives and enhanced existing programs designed to provide the citizens of this great Commonwealth with the superior police services they deserve. For example, the PSP is moving toward refreshing the mobile video recorders in our vehicles and outfitting Troopers with body cameras. A new training academy is being designed on the site of the current training facility. The proposed design will enhance scenario-based training and better equip Troopers and participating law enforcement partners to effectively employ de-escalation tactics and less lethal force options, while further enhancing their ability to interact with persons in mental or emotional crisis. PSP has added full-time recruiters to address decreased interest in the profession and to limit barriers associated with hiring and retention.

Due to rising costs, greater coverage demands, and supply chain issues, the PSP's vehicle fleet is experiencing higher mileage than ever before. Outfitted with the mobile data terminal and P25 radio, the patrol vehicle is a Trooper's office, transportation, and lifeline of communication. While the PSP follows a robust maintenance schedule, the aging vehicle fleet is a very real concern. The Governor's budget proposal would provide an additional \$13 million to help refresh the vehicle fleet and \$2.8 million to replace radio systems in fleet vehicles to ensure reliable response to emergency calls for service.

For over a decade, the PSP has been a leader within the law enforcement community in identifying, investigating, and prosecuting instances of human trafficking. In 2022, members of our Organized Crime Task Force participated

in joint investigations with our local and federal law enforcement partners to combat these crimes. Additionally, the PSP has provided human trafficking detection training to hundreds of law enforcement professionals to assist them with these types of investigations. The PSP provides free training to both public and private organizations on indicators of human trafficking. This training enables these entities to recognize, and report suspected human trafficking operations.

To further evaluate the needs of the PSP, on June 24, 2019, Senate Resolution 105 was adopted and directed the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to update their 2001 study on the PSP's enlisted complement. The study found that since 2001, the PSP realized an increase in coverage areas, assuming responsibilities in an additional

65 municipalities with a 38 percent increase in total incidents. Over the same time period, the PSP absorbed 55 additional mandated activities which have strained resources and negatively impacted patrol functions. The PSP's complement is capped at 4,740 enlisted members. The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee recognized a need to increase the statutory cap but stopped short of providing a suggested limit.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the members of this Committee and the General Assembly for their diligent work in recognizing and supporting the PSP's fiscal needs. Because our budget is primarily driven by personnel costs, finding a way to fully fund the PSP is inexorably linked to our ability to provide the citizens of this great Commonwealth with the quality service they deserve and

have come to expect. Governor Shapiro has proposed a budget which will permit the PSP to fund four cadet classes and train approximately 400 new Troopers. Additionally, this proposed budget promises to provide funding through a new, dedicated fund known as the Public Safety and Protection Fund and fully reduce the PSP's reliance on the Motor License Fund. We applaud the Governor's proposal of a dedicated and sustainable funding stream for the PSP, and pledge to be good stewards of the investment in the professionalism, training, and integrity inherent in the PSP.

In conclusion, I am proud of the men and women of the Pennsylvania State Police, who continue to serve the citizens and visitors of this Commonwealth with dedication and honor.

Thank you for allowing me to address your Committee.

I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.