

2024-2025 BUDGET REQUEST
PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE

STATEMENT TO HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE

MARCH 04, 2024



Good afternoon, 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 Deputy Commissioner of Operations, Lieutenant Colonel George Bivens; the Deputy Commissioner of Staff, Lieutenant Colonel 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 residents 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, 81 percent of the Commonwealth's total land area. In 2023, our Troopers investigated 70,999 crashes and made 18,955 arrests for DUI. Additionally, our commitment to highway safety was demonstrated by the 76,456 commercial motor vehicle inspections conducted statewide and the issuance of 484,619 traffic citations for violations such as those related to distracted driving and speeding.

The 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, latent fingerprint examination, and other laboratory services to the same entities at our seven regional crime laboratories.

The PSP continues to experience increased demands for our services. Activations of the Special Emergency Response Team (SERT) have increased 236% since 2017. Aviation assets continue to provide invaluable assistance in criminal investigations, search and rescue, and recovery efforts. The 18 full-time Troopers assigned to the Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team conducted 433 assessments in 2023 to help make our schools and places

of worship safer. In our effort to address gun violence, the PSP has partnered with local officials in areas including Chester, Aliquippa, Philadelphia, and Harrisburg to focus on removing illegally possessed firearms from our communities, and the Governor's proposal addressing gun violence would allow the addition of several positions to the Pennsylvania Criminal Intelligence Center and Firearms Unit to further combat gun violence and straw purchases. The Office of Community Engagement continues to address barriers, ease tensions, contribute to community events, and complement our recruitment efforts.

Over the past year, the PSP has moved forward with new initiatives and enhanced existing programs designed to provide the residents 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. Thanks to the support of the Shapiro Administration and this General Assembly, construction of the new training academy has begun. The proposed design will enhance scenario-based training and better equip our Troopers and participating law enforcement partners to effectively employ de-escalation techniques and less lethal force options, while further enhancing their ability to interact with those in mental or emotional crisis. The PSP has added full-time recruiters to address decreased interest in the law enforcement profession and to limit barriers associated with the hiring and retention of a diverse workforce.

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. The PSP's complement was statutorily capped at 4,310 enlisted members. The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee recognized a need to increase the statutory cap but stopped short of providing a suggested limit. The provisions of HB 1300 of 2023 proposed to increase the State Police complement cap by 100 Troopers and was signed by Governor Shapiro on December 13,

2023, becoming Act 34 of 2023. This was the first trooper complement cap increase in over two decades.

Last year, the college credit requirement for PSP Trooper applicants was removed. This change has opened the door to a previously ineligible applicant pool and has resulted in a 258% increase in applicants to take the test to become a Trooper. Governor Shapiro's budget proposes \$16 million to hire and train 432 new Troopers. This combination of support, a pool of newly eligible applicants, and an increased complement cap has the PSP poised to begin backfilling many of the field positions which have been lost over the years to various mandates and non-patrol-related functions.

Due to rising costs and supply chain issues, the PSP's vehicle fleet is still 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 we follow a strict maintenance schedule, the aging vehicle fleet is a very real concern. The Governor's budget proposal would provide an additional \$7 million to help refresh the vehicle fleet and ensure reliable response to emergency calls for service. An additional \$24 million is proposed to continue the replacement cycle of the PSP's fixed wing and rotary aircraft which will address the need for increased search and rescue capabilities as well as operational transports, evidence recovery and delivery, and out-of-state prisoner extraditions.

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 2023, 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.

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 our fiscal needs. Because our budget is primarily driven by personnel costs, funding the PSP is inexorably linked to our ability to provide the residents of this great Commonwealth with the quality

service they deserve and have come to expect. Governor Shapiro has proposed a budget that will ensure the PSP is well-staffed, well-funded, and well-equipped.

In conclusion, I am proud of the women and men of the Pennsylvania State Police, who continue to serve Pennsylvanians and visitors of this Commonwealth with dedication and honor. I pledge to be a good steward of the investment in the professionalism, training, and integrity inherent in the PSP.

Thank you for allowing me to address your Committee. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.