Good afternoon Chairman Sarlo, Vice-Chairman Stack, and members of the Senate Budget Committee.

It is my pleasure to be here today, and to have the opportunity to address the Committee.

With me today are First Assistant Attorney General Rebecca Ricigliano, Executive Assistant Attorney General Deborah Edwards, Counsel to the Attorney General Christine Baker, Chief of Staff Nancy Fitterer, Administrator Jennifer Fradel and Budget Director William Cranford.

Also accompanying me are Col. Rick Fuentes, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police, and Chris Rodriguez, Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, as well as other members of our leadership team.

As you know, I have served as Acting Attorney General for approximately two months now, but it's been my privilege to serve with the Department of Law and Public Safety for the past 10 years.
During that time, I’ve developed an ever-growing appreciation for the scope of our department’s mission, and for the reach of its various Divisions and Commissions.

As everyone here recognizes, New Jersey is a thriving and richly diverse state.

It is an international hub of industry, travel, commerce and recreation.

It is home to Newark Liberty Airport – one of the nation’s busiest airports -- as well as the Port of New York/New Jersey, a nerve center of international shipping.

It is also home to a host of colleges and universities, medical complexes, cultural attractions, sports stadiums, and resort destinations.

In short, tens of millions of people live, work, travel and pursue leisure activities in our state every day, around the clock.

It is humbling to consider that our department is responsible for the safety and well-being of so many, but at the same time we welcome the responsibility.

It’s a challenge we take seriously, and a task we handle capably – with a steadfast commitment to excellence in all aspects of what we do.

However, we cannot excel on our own.
Today I want to thank this Committee for consistently supporting the department's mission, and for providing us the annual funding needed to do the job right.

At the Department of Law and Public Safety, we recognize the essential nature of our mission, but we do not view that as an imprimatur to spend without restraint.

We take seriously our obligation to purchase wisely.

We take seriously our obligation to realize cost savings.

And we take seriously our obligation to avoid waste and duplication.

In short, we are always looking for ways to be both effective and efficient -- to spend sensibly, and to channel our resources into efforts that make a genuine difference.

For example, this year's proposed budget supports start-up costs for a new State Police class -- the 158th class -- and the purchase of approximately 300 new State Police vehicles.

A new recruit class is essential to maintaining the needed personnel strength of our State Police, and replacing worn-out, high-mileage patrol cars with new ones will ensure that our Troopers are driving the safest, most reliable vehicles as they pursue their daily mission of keeping New Jersey safe.
Our proposed budget also maintains support for various technology-based crime fighting efforts. These efforts provide vital protection at a time when many criminals – including violent street gangs, would-be terrorists and on-line sexual predators -- are exploiting technology.

One example is the Corr-Stat Regional Real Time Crime Center in Newark, a linchpin of our intelligence-led policing approach.

I will discuss the Real Time Crime Center and other efforts later in my remarks, but suffice to say that our proposed budget enables us to continue the important work of fighting crime through use of technology.

At the Department of Law and Public Safety, thousands of dedicated civilian and sworn law enforcement employees come to work each day ready to serve New Jersey residents.

We touch myriad areas of life in our state, from promoting the responsible sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages through our Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control, to ensuring the safety of drivers and pedestrians through the work of our Division of Highway Traffic Safety.

At the same time, our Division of Gaming Enforcement works to preserve the integrity of New Jersey’s casino gaming industry, and our Racing Commission and State Athletic Control Board do the same for New Jersey’s horse racing and combat sports industries, respectively.
Our Division on Civil Rights protects citizens from discrimination, and our Division of Consumer Affairs safeguards the public from consumer fraud scams, faulty products, and unscrupulous or unqualified licensed professionals.

But perhaps the most visible and far-reaching aspect of what we do involves fighting crime.

As we all understand, communities are the backbone of our state, and quality community life begins with people feeling safe, secure and protected from crime.

Toward that end, I am pleased to note that, in 2015, we brought more criminal cases and charged more criminal defendants than in the past six years.

Through the work of our Divisions of Criminal Justice and State Police, we prosecuted successful cases against violent gangs that had been terrorizing our urban centers.

We took drug dealers and gun runners off the streets,

We broke up international carjacking rings.

We sent sexual predators to prison, successfully prosecuted financial scam artists and convicted many corrupt public officials as well.
The list goes on, but in short, our street-level crime fighting efforts made New Jersey communities safer, and enhanced their quality of life.

Of course, the department has many other critical responsibilities as well, including:

Combating insurance fraud.

Leading the State’s emergency response and homeland security efforts.

Preventing unlawful discrimination.

And providing care, custody and redirection for young offenders placed with the Juvenile Justice Commission.

Our department also serves as New Jersey’s largest law firm, advising State agencies, defending State statutes, and pursuing affirmative litigation designed to protect children, safeguard our environment, preserve the State’s precious financial assets and achieve other important goals.

I am pleased to note that, through the efforts of our Division of Law, in 2015 we obtained litigation settlements and judgments on behalf of New Jersey citizens totaling more than $451 million.
That figure represents a 30 percent increase over the amount recovered the previous year, and includes dollars obtained as a result of environmental lawsuits, debt recovery actions, taxation matters, lawsuits alleging fraud, and other types of affirmative litigation.

Among many other successes, we negotiated two separate environmental settlements worth a total of $15.5 million in 2015.

These settlements resolved litigation by the State against two groundwater polluters – one of them Lyondell, a chemical manufacturing company, and the other Vitol, a global energy conglomerate.

We anticipate more settlements of this nature in 2016.

New Jersey also received $21.5 million last year through a global settlement with Standard & Poor's in which our Division of Law represented the State.

The settlement resolved allegations that S&P had violated federal and state laws – and harmed New Jersey investors – by falsely claiming to be an independent source of analysis on complex investments known as structured finance securities.

These litigation settlements -- and our work in many other areas of endeavor -- reflect a clear nexus between the department and the lives of millions who call New Jersey home.
As everyone here recognizes, one of the most important issues facing our state -- from both a criminal justice and quality-of-life perspective – is the ongoing heroin and prescription opiate crisis.

By working with Governor Christie, the Legislature, the courts, our law enforcement partners at every level and many dedicated community leaders, we've made gains in the effort to save lives, get treatment for those suffering from the disease of addiction, and keep these deadly drugs from being diverted and abused.

However, the battle is far from over.

Statewide, our department continues to engage in a multi-faceted effort to address the opiate scourge – from its root source to the related, often violent crime it generates and, finally, to the tragic outcomes too often played out on the “user” end of the supply chain.

An integral part of this approach is our Drug Monitoring Initiative or “DMI,” a multi-state drug intelligence system developed by our State Police Regional Operations and Intelligence Center (the “Rock”).

We're all familiar with the old adage “knowledge is power,” and that certainly applies when we're talking about DMI.

Among other things, DMI helps us to understand the drug landscape in New Jersey and elsewhere – using empirical data, collected in real time.
It helps us to zero in on the presence and prevalence of drugs, as well as to map potential supply chains, and the dynamics of drug demand.

This in turn enables the most effective assignment of law enforcement and health community resources which, as we all know, are not unlimited.

Other elements of our approach to the opiate crisis include the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program or “PMP,” and Project Medicine Drop, two important prevention initiatives under the direction of our Division of Consumer Affairs.

Thanks to unprecedented growth of the program, most New Jersey physicians are now registered for access to the PMP data base.

In addition, we have joined forces with seven other states – including our neighbors Delaware and New York -- to share PMP information on the sale of prescriptions for Controlled Dangerous Substances.

Through this collaborative effort, prescribers and pharmacists here and in the other six participating states can identify “doctor shoppers” who cross state lines to obtain drugs fraudulently.

And through Project Medicine Drop, upwards of 30 tons of old medications have been disposed of at more than 150 permanent and mobile “drop boxes” throughout our state – including one at the Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, the first New Jersey military installation to host one of our drop boxes.
Naturally, our ongoing anti-drug efforts also include vigorous “traditional” law enforcement measures – including heroin mill raids, drug corner crackdowns, undercover investigations, street-level stings, and other pro-active policing strategies.

These have been highly effective in breaking up dangerous, often well-organized operations that traffic in heroin and other potentially lethal drugs.

But we still need to do more.

And that is why we've continued to promote use of the life-saving opiate antidote Naloxone – frequently referred to as “Narcan,” a popular brand of the medication – by policing agencies and others across our state.

As you know, all New Jersey State Troopers now carry a life-saving Naloxone kit on patrol.

And we've worked with county prosecutors and local police agencies across New Jersey to not only assist them in equipping and training officers to use Naloxone, but also to help defray the cost.

Simply put, there are still too many lives being lost to heroin and prescription opiate overdoses.

However, we believe Naloxone is making an important difference, as evidenced by recent data from the ROIC.
That data shows there have been upwards of 3,400 deployments of life-saving Naloxone statewide by police since we began the initiative in April 2014.

And while we can't pinpoint the number of overdose cases in which survival was a direct result of Naloxone intervention, we are confident that many, many lives are being saved through its use by police in the field.

Of course, our efforts to address the opiate crisis run concurrent with a host of other vital public safety responsibilities, not the least of which is the need to safeguard New Jersey citizens from terror.

As we all recognize, as a nation, we’re not immune from terror on our own soil. On any given day, we stand with the rest of the world as a potential target for mass bombings, mass shootings and other attacks.

Our department must respond effectively to an ever-shifting terror landscape – one that has proven challenging to anticipate from Boston to Paris, and from San Bernadino to Brussels.

Against this backdrop, nothing can be taken for granted, and nothing can be left to chance.

It is our continuing responsibility -- working with our local, state and federal partners -- to ensure that New Jersey is as equipped as possible to detect threats of mass violence, and as prepared as possible to deal with such attacks.
Toward that goal we've made important strides – again, with support from this Committee – in improving and expanding our homeland protection efforts.

Largely through the efforts of State Police and the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, we have upgraded communications systems and employed effective “target hardening” strategies.

We've worked with local first-responder agencies on enhanced equipment and training.

We've strengthened our intelligence gathering, sharing and analysis capabilities, and conducted all manner of “active shooter,” “marketplace defender” and other emergency response exercises.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention here that, in addition to these efforts, we’ve made it a priority to expand public awareness and encourage public participation.

As the nation learned in 2015 from a well-reported case in Waseca, Minnesota – a case in which a citizen washing dishes at her kitchen window helped foil a teenager's mass murder plot -- community engagement is crucial in the war on terror, and on other crime.

To encourage community engagement and support, our office has recently taken several actions and issued related policy directives for law enforcement.
As always, these actions and policy directives are designed to make law enforcement more effective, but they also are designed to make law enforcement more accountable.

As we see it, community engagement is essential to the policing mission, and you can't have authentic community engagement without the trust that comes from accountability.

As many here are aware, our office committed approximately $1.5 million last year to equip State Troopers in the field with body cameras, and we offered grant funding to assist local police departments who wished to do the same.

In addition, we issued a policy directive designed to help police agencies make the best possible use of the body camera technology.

From our perspective, body-worn cameras are the wave of the future.

By providing a video and audio record of what happens on the street, body cameras not only supply valuable evidence, they promote transparency and accountability on the part of both police and the public.

I'm heartened to note that statewide, a total of 176 local police departments are acquiring body cameras with a share of the total $2.5 million in grant funding we’ve provided.
At the same time, we've put in place an Attorney General's Directive on use-of-deadly force investigations designed to increase transparency and eliminate any potential for conflict.

New Jersey has long been a model for the nation with its rules requiring that all incidents in which police use deadly force be thoroughly and fairly investigated.

But now we're raising the bar even higher.

Among other things, we now require that the relevant County Prosecutor conduct a thorough “conflicts review” within 72 hours of a deadly force incident, and report on that review to our Division of Criminal Justice.

The Division then reviews that Prosecutor's report and determines whether any individuals should be “walled off” from investigating the case, or whether the entire investigation should be transferred to another County Prosecutor's Office.

In addition, our Directive requires the mandatory “walling off” of a local police department when one of its own officers is the subject of a deadly force investigation.

In no substantive way, then, can a municipal officer's local police force colleagues have anything to do with a review of his or her conduct.
Finally, in the name of the highest degree of accountability, the Directive requires issuance of a Public Statement at the end of any deadly force investigation that does not result in a prosecution.

We believe these changes are an important step toward ensuring communities that police use-of-force investigations will always be unbiased, thorough, conflict-free and publicly accountable.

I'm sure you would agree that, here in 2016, more must go into the fight against crime than just "boots on the ground."

As I alluded to earlier, we believe building trust and engendering community support is a major part of the equation.

Another is breaking the “misery cycle” of crime, imprisonment and re-offense that has destroyed so many lives and so many families – especially in New Jersey’s urban centers.

That is why our office has been actively involved in a host of efforts – many of them youth oriented -- designed to engage communities, and encourage greater interaction between police and the residents they serve.

These efforts were born of an understanding that simply catching, prosecuting, and jailing criminals will never alone solve society’s crime problem.

They were born of an understanding that, in order to make a positive, long-term impact in the neighborhoods our officers are
sworn to protect, we must do more to encourage alternatives to criminal behavior, and we must do more to encourage people to see us as allies -- not adversaries.

Time will not permit me to discuss all our efforts in this regard, but I’d like to mention a few, starting with Municipal Planning Boards.

Our office recognizes that the crime “cycle” often grows from a seedbed of family problems, truancy and juvenile delinquency.

That is why our Office of Community Justice -- working collaboratively with university partners and local leaders -- has helped to form Municipal Planning Boards in Atlantic City, Camden, Asbury Park, Newark and other cities around the state to identify and implement policies geared toward helping young people avoid trouble and make positive choices.

These Planning Boards are made up of a diverse group of stakeholders from government, the community, faith-based organizations, education, and law enforcement.

Their role, among other things, is to facilitate efforts to mentor and otherwise guide and assist at-risk young people in the community -- those who may be teetering on the ledge between good life decisions and regrettable ones.

Statewide, we’re also providing Positive Youth Development Grants -- grants awarded to non-profit agencies that offer support services for young people who live in economically disadvantaged or high crime areas.
The objective in awarding these grants is to deter delinquency and criminal conduct, while at the same time encouraging productive, empowering, “pro-social” behavior.

There is also JDAI -- the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative – which is a partnership involving our Juvenile Justice Commission, the courts and a host of county and community-level stakeholders throughout New Jersey.

JDAI has allowed for placement of thousands of juvenile offenders – young people who otherwise would be inappropriately confined in juvenile detention centers – in alternate settings. It allows us to maintain community safety while saving taxpayer dollars.

JDAI is giving many young offenders an opportunity to redirect their lives and, with support, work toward becoming productive, law abiding citizens.

Clearly, families are one of the building blocks of any successful community, and many of our efforts are geared toward giving families a better chance to succeed.

Consistent with this view, we’ve given our full support to bail reform in New Jersey – reform that will give State judges discretion to deny bail for certain demonstrably dangerous accused offenders, and allow for the imposition of non-monetary bail conditions for certain low-risk defendants.
Why does this matter? Because incarceration while awaiting trial can result in lost wages, lost jobs, lost contact with loved ones and, in the end, the disintegration of families.

Obviously, there are competing interests at play and layers of complexity involved in the bail reform discussion, but from our perspective, certain fundamental truths stand out:

- Empowering judges to deny bail for the most dangerous defendants is the right thing to do, because it will help protect crime victims, witnesses and the community at large.

- Providing non-monetary release options for low-risk defendants is also the right thing to do, because the question of “freedom vs. incarceration” should not come down to who has the most material assets.

At the Attorney General’s Office, we know that everyone connected with the State’s criminal justice process is committed to equality.

However, absent the kind of reform we’re working toward, we fear the system risks sending a different message – that if you're charged with a crime, the nature of your treatment in the justice process may be influenced by how much money you have.
To be clear: In endorsing bail reform, we are not in any way turning “soft” on crime.

Our unwavering stance is that individuals who refuse to get the message -- who continue to threaten community life by carrying guns, committing violent acts and engaging in other serious criminal activity -- should be off the streets, and for a long time.

But we also recognize that incarceration may be inappropriate for many other, lesser offenders -- for example, those with mental health issues who, with treatment, could turn their lives around.

Across New Jersey, we continue to work with communities on a variety of fronts to help people who’ve made mistakes find a new path.

I’m talking about efforts that range from assisting with such “big-ticket” needs as housing, health care, addiction counseling, and finding a job to smaller needs -- which can be crucial -- like arranging transportation or finding a suit of clothes to wear.

It’s also vital to community support for law enforcement that, when citizens look at the police officers who are protecting them, they see themselves.

In keeping with this mindset, we continue to work to increase diversity within our State Police ranks by recruiting highly-qualified candidates who meet the division’s rigorous standards.
I’m pleased to note that our most recent State Police class was encouragingly diverse, with an overall make-up of more than 33 percent minorities.

However, diversity is an on-going commitment, and our work in this area continues.

One of the diversity-related efforts we're excited about is our new State Police Recruiting and Employee Development Bureau, which is now up and running.

The bureau has created a mechanism for consistent outreach to the community, even during times when there is no active recruitment cycle.

This represents an important new approach to having a State Police force that is not only as diverse as the population it serves, but also has been built through unprecedented community connection.

Through the work of the new bureau, State Police are in the community on a regular basis – visiting schools, sporting events, churches and other places where people come together.

In this manner, our Troopers are interacting with the public like never before. They are talking regularly to groups and individuals about what the job of a State Trooper entails, what it takes to become a Trooper, and about the value of living a life of service, among other things.
Our State Troopers are also significantly involved in mentoring young people throughout New Jersey, not only with an eye toward perhaps interesting them in a State Police career someday, but to help forge the very bonds of connection and trust I've been talking about this afternoon.

Today and in the future, the success of our department – and law enforcement in a broader sense -- hinges on our ability to be agile in the face of change.

I’ve been talking about this dynamic largely with respect to the relationship between law enforcement and the community, but it applies to the nuts and bolts of policing as well – especially where technology is concerned.

Throughout the state, we’ve been using our resources to develop a variety of technology-driven systems aimed at protecting communities by fighting crime.

One example, as I alluded to earlier in my remarks, is the Corr-State Region Real Time Crime Center in Newark.

The Real Time Crime Center takes the intelligence gathering and sharing capabilities of the ROIC and focuses them on a section of the Route 21 corridor that runs between Newark and Paterson – the most populous region of our state, and home to 27 separate municipalities.

Because this area is overlaid by a network of highways, the crime that occurs there is highly mobile. It is never solely the concern of the town in which it occurs.
This transient crime problem requires a regional approach, and that is what the Real Time Crime Center enables.

The Real Time Crime Center has developed a network that gathers, receives, analyzes, and distributes real-time tactical intelligence and support to law enforcement agencies operating within the Corr-Stat region.

Its primary focus is on shootings, murders, and carjackings, but it is capable of collecting and analyzing data for other types of crime as well.

Time does not permit me to discuss all of our various technology-assisted crime fighting efforts, but I can assure you that we’re using the same intelligence-driven approach to prevent and police crime throughout our state – including key regions of central and southern New Jersey.

In addition, we continue to deploy our more “traditional” resources to supplement local police efforts and help drive down the rate of violent crime – particularly shootings and other crimes involving guns -- through such efforts in Trenton and Newark as the TIDE initiative, and through our Atlantic City Task Force.

We’re also very proud of a relatively new forensic protocol being employed by our State Police Crime Lab, which is helping to solve more gun crimes, and do so at an impressive rate.
Launched in January 2015, the new protocol requires every crime gun submitted to the Ballistics Unit to undergo a comprehensive forensic process -- including latent fingerprint analysis, microscopic examination for biological or trace evidence, collection of DNA swabs for future analysis if needed, and the test-firing of all weapons for immediate entry into the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network.

This is the most comprehensive forensic protocol in the nation, and it has enabled prosecutors to take a more aggressive stance on gun crime prosecutions.

In 2015, more than 1,000 crime guns were submitted to the Ballistics Unit for analysis, and more than 150 of those guns generated a national ballistics data base “hit.”

Moreover, the speed with which these results were obtained was exceptional.

Turnaround time for results was two days – down from 10 months in the past -- thereby expediting many crime gun investigations and enabling prosecutors to shape the particulars of their gun cases sooner than later.

I also want to note that we recently took action designed to streamline the firearms permitting process here in New Jersey, and make it more uniform across our 21 counties.

As many of you may recall, we issued a Directive last month that, among other things, calls on local firearms licensing
authorities to limit the requirements they impose on gun permit applicants to those prescribed by state statute, and to process permit applications in a timely fashion.

At the same time, we also issued guidance designed to address such issues as what constitutes “reasonably necessary” deviation from a direct travel route when gun owners with no carry permit are transporting an unloaded, properly-stored firearm -- as they can legally do in some circumstances.

Again, we believe the actions we’ve taken both clarify and streamline New Jersey’s firearms permitting laws – not only for the public, but for police and prosecutors as well -- while maintaining a safe environment throughout our state.

There is much more to say about the work our department is doing with the resources you provide each year, but I know you have questions, so I will close now.

Once again, I want to thank the Committee for its ongoing support of our mission, and for the opportunity to discuss some of the department’s key efforts here this afternoon. I will now be happy to answer your questions.

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