



THE NEW YORK STATE PUBLIC EMPLOYEES FEDERATION

Public Protection Joint Legislative Budget Hearing
2024-2025 Executive Budget Proposal

January 25, 2024

Testimony by Wayne Spence, President

Good afternoon Chairpersons Krueger, Weinstein, Salazar, Dilan, Gonzalez, Otis and other honorable members of the legislature. My name is Wayne Spence and I am the president of the 50,000-member strong New York State Public Employees Federation (PEF). I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about the 2024-25 Executive Budget proposal and its impact on services for the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) and Office of Information Technology Services (OITS). Our union is composed of professional, scientific and technical experts who provide critical services to the residents and taxpayers of New York State. Serving as the state's frontline essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, my members have risked their lives and those of their families to maintain the continuity and quality of services to New York's most vulnerable citizens. PEF members are the frontline workers who care for the state's residents most in need of services, including the incarcerated population. PEF members take a great deal of pride in their work, the care they provide to clients, and the welfare of their fellow New Yorkers.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND COMMUNITY SUPERVISION (DOCCS)

PEF represents many of the non-uniformed employees employed at state correctional facilities. These members include vocational and habilitation specialists and medical professionals like nurses and mental health providers. Like many other state agencies, DOCCS is having a difficult time attracting and retaining employees to carry out its critical mission. In fact, DOCCS has been perennially one of the worst offenders for mandating overtime for its health care employees. That is why we have called for changes to the Tier 6 pension plan for state employees.

Thanks to your work and that of Governor Hochul, New York took an important first step in adjusting its defined benefit pension plan for public employees in Tier 6 by re-instituting the 5-year vesting requirement for plan members and by excluding overtime compensation from the calculation of employee contributions to the plan. But more needs to be done. The current Tier 6 plan does a disservice to state and local employers by removing the traditional benefit enhancements structured in typical defined benefit plans that serve to attract and retain talent and to foster long-term staff experience, capacity and excellence. We believe the next important step in adjusting the Tier 6 plan is to standardize the employee contribution at 3% (A. 5487 Pheffer Amato). Currently, higher paid, more experienced workers contribute more to the plan. The current employee contribution structure essentially penalizes workers for working overtime, earning promotions, or securing contractual salary increases. This serves as a disincentive for certain promotional or transfer opportunities. Standardizing the employee contribution would incentivize individuals to become long-term public employees and

provide state agencies the trained and experienced civil servants they desperately need. Other recommended Tier 6 changes include:

- a. Reinstating the 3-year final average salary calculation;
- b. Restoring the 2% calculation at 20 years of service;
- c. Reauthorizing retirement eligibility at age 55 with 30 or more years of public service; and
- d. Improving the amount of compensation that can be used to calculate a worker's final pension.

While we understand and appreciate that "Fixing Tier 6" will take time, we need to take that next step now so we can attract and retain the workers the state needs and rebuild a career public workforce dedicated to delivering quality services to the public.

Reject Fast Tracked Prison Closures (S.8305/A.8805 – Part D)

I am extremely concerned that the Governor, in her Executive Budget, seeks to expedite the closure of up to five correctional facilities with only 90 days' notice. As you may know, state law requires that at least 12 months written notice must be provided to impacted unions, M/C employees and host communities prior to any closure.

The legislature, in its wisdom, developed a law to fairly deal with the closure of correctional facilities. In her executive budget proposal, the Governor is looking to usurp that authority.

Additionally, given the implementation of the Humane Alternative to Long-Term Solitary Confinement (HALT) law and the inability of the state to hire sufficient correctional officers to ensure appropriate security, space has been an important buffer to keep people safe. PEF is concerned that these closures are a result of the inability of DOCCS to hire appropriate staff and the implementation of these closures will increase the density of the incarcerated population in certain facilities which will, in turn, result in increases in assaults and violence against vulnerable incarcerated individuals, correction officers and staff. Over the last few years, assaults on both staff and other incarcerated individuals have been steadily rising, even as the correctional facility population has been steadily decreasing. More space would also serve as a barrier to communicable disease outbreaks that too often occur in places like correctional facilities.

It is also unfair to expect staff and the affected communities to plan their next steps with only 90 days' notice. There are many logistical concerns that must be carefully addressed prior to any closure. From the moving of incarcerated individuals and the potential effect on their loved ones to the uprooting

of families due to job relocation. Three months is not an appropriate length of time. Homes will need to be sold, children's school enrollment changed, and new jobs found in unfamiliar communities. These closures will also impact ancillary businesses located near the correctional facilities from gas stations and diners to grocery stores and barber shops. These businesses should also have the courtesy of the full 12 months so that they can make appropriate decisions regarding the investments in staff or renovations.

Recommendation: Reject Part D of the Public Protection and General Government Article VII Budget Bill (A.8805/S.8305)

Support SAVE Program

PEF supports the Governor's proposal to expand the Supervision Against Violent Engagement (SAVE) program. It would ensure that individuals under the supervision of Parole with mental health diagnoses or at higher risk of domestic violence have individualized treatment plans and parole officers with specialized training and more manageable caseloads to support them.

Recommendation: Support Expanding the SAVE Program

Support Ending Lag Payroll and Salary Withholding Program for New State Employees

(S.8305/A.8805 – Part Q)

For more than two decades, the state has implemented a two-week lag payroll system, originally instituted for budget savings. Over the course of time, the state has enacted an additional salary withholding program which holds one day's pay for the first five pay periods, meaning that new employees do not receive a full paycheck for almost 14 weeks after beginning their employment with the state. This type of program would never be deemed acceptable in private industry and in fact would violate the state's labor laws. The program has long outlived its usefulness and is yet another reason why the state is not competitive with private employers. PEF fully supports ending the lag payroll system for new hires so those struggling with housing, student loans and other expenses can make ends meet.

Recommendation: Support Ending Lag Payroll and Salary Withholding Program for New State Employees (S.8305/A.8805 – Part Q)

Oppose Elimination of the Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (S.8305/A.8805 – Part S)

The Governor's plan to eliminate certain Medicare Part B reimbursements is unfair and bad policy. The Governor's proposal would cease reimbursement for the Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amounts (IRMAA) for "higher" income state retirees. Specifically, the state would retroactively

discontinue the IRMAA Medicare Part B reimbursement back to January 1, 2024. The new IRMAA burden will cost each affected retiree anywhere from \$694 to \$4,164 annually. With recent inflation and other costs rising, eliminating this program will hurt many New Yorkers.

Eliminating this insurance reimbursement will greatly impact retirees who dedicated their lives to public service and are now on fixed incomes. PEF retirees do not have the financial flexibility to go out and earn extra money in response to budgetary whims. In addition, the program looks backward to the beginning of the year, meaning that there is no opportunity to plan for a change that is retroactive to January 1.

NYSHIP retirees living on fixed incomes were provided a promise upon retirement. It is shortsighted to achieve savings on the backs of retired public servants and the enactment of such a proposal will certainly not help the state's recruitment efforts move forward.

RECOMMENDATION: Reject Elimination of the Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (S.8305/A.8805 – Part S)

OTHER ITEMS THAT REQUIRE ACTION

Community Supervision/Parole

Amend “Less is More” Law and Provide Needed Resources for Treatment and Re-entry Services:

While PEF opposed the “Less is More” law (Chapter 427 of 2021), the union supports the continued effort to deinstitutionalize the criminal justice system and many of the law's components, like providing earned time credits for adhering to a parole plan and ensuring parolees have expedited proceedings.

It is important to remember that individuals on parole have not completed their court-ordered sentence for the crime(s) for which they were convicted. Parole is a tool to reward positive behavior and an opportunity for individuals with appropriate supports and resources to build upon their successes by serving out the remainder of their sentence back in the community.

PEF supports providing incarcerated individuals and parolees with opportunities for success and rewarding individuals for their efforts to become productive citizens. However, reforms are needed to ensure that parolees serving sentences for violent felony offenses are held accountable for their failure to adhere to their agreed upon parole release plan. This is necessary to shape and reinforce appropriate behaviors for long-term success and to protect the public.

Under the current law, parolees may not be reincarcerated for failure to adhere to their drug treatment plans, mental health treatments or other offenses like consuming alcohol, violating curfew, failing to report to their officer or bureau, etc. This lack of accountability leads to the compounding of behaviors that are inconsistent with success. These individuals re-offend because they lack the tools and effective oversight to maintain their level of success back in the community. PEF suggests the following amendments:

- (1) **Set a Higher Standard of Conduct for Parolees with Violent Felony Offenses:** The original “Less is More” law (Chapter 427 of 2021) did not differentiate between parolees with non-violent felony convictions or violent felony convictions. As such, violent felony offenders on parole cannot be re-incarcerated for violating their parole plans, including skipping court-ordered addiction treatment, mental health treatment, missing curfew or failing to report to their parole officer. Individuals convicted of possession or use of a firearm or dangerous weapon, criminal contempt, kidnapping, and failure to register as a sex offender should be required to maintain a higher standard of conduct while on parole to ensure they are meeting their rehabilitative goals and to protect the public from the potential for re-offenses while they are serving their sentences.

PEF believes current law should provide for the potential for immediate reincarceration of any parolee who fails to register on the sex offender registry, persistently skips court-ordered mental health or drug treatment, threatens or engages in domestic abuse and/or purposefully absconds from custody. To protect due process and individual rights, the ultimate decision on re-incarceration should be subject to immediate judicial review and determination. We believe these immediate sanctions should be authorized for these violations as they constitute a significant departure from the conduct needed for successful re-integration and an identifiable, immediate and unnecessary danger to the public.

- (2) **Correct Shortcomings of Earned Time Credits (“30 for 30”):**

PEF fully supports awarding earned time credits for parolees adhering to their agreed upon parole plan. These individuals should be lauded for their efforts and awarded reduced time commensurate with their success on parole. However, parolees who have not been adhering to their parole plan have also been receiving earned time credits. This is unfair to those who are working toward success, provides negative reinforcement to parolees violating their parole

plans and, ultimately, is dangerous for the public. The state should not award earned time credits if the individual is violating their parole plan.

(3) Define “Absconding” to Protect Local Communities:

The “Less is More” law enacted by Chapter 427 of 2021 amended the definition of “absconding” for individuals on parole supervision and placed the onus on parole officers to re-engage releasees who cease contact with their parole officers. Individuals convicted of a crime and afforded an opportunity to serve out the completion of their sentence in the community have a responsibility to adhere to their court-ordered parole plans, including periodic check-ins with their parole officers.

There is absolutely no reason why any releasee should not and could not maintain contact with his or her parole officer for 30 days or more. PEF believes that any individual, especially individuals convicted of violent felony offenses, should be deemed to be “absconding” after a period of 30 days if they maintain no contact with their parole officers or regional bureaus.

Currently, parole officers spend an inordinate amount of time searching for releasees who purposefully elect to disengage from the supervision process. The inability of parole officers to maintain required periodic contact with releasees, especially those serving sentences for violent felony offenses, puts communities and families at risk. The time dedicated by parole offices to locate these releasees also negatively impacts the ability of officers to assist other releasees who need support to secure housing, mental health treatment, addiction treatment, health care, job assistance and/or other services.

Releasees on community supervision have been convicted and sentenced for committing a crime or crimes. They have NOT completed their court-imposed sentence, they have been afforded the opportunity to serve their sentences in the community under certain agreed upon conditions. It is for these reasons that it is in the public interest for releasees to be held accountable for adhering to the terms of their conditional release.

PEF does not support parolees being re-incarcerated unfairly or for indeterminate sentences; PEF supports the role of the judiciary and believes judges should render any and all determinations on re-incarceration for offenders; PEF believes public safety should have equal weight with regard to violent felony offenders who violate their parole agreements; and PEF believes immediate support and resources should be provided to parolees who fail to meet their parole plan objectives. The reforms we

are seeking are designed to affirm the courts ordered parole plan, to increase opportunities for success by adhering to such plan and protecting the public from individuals who are still serving the sentence for their original conviction.

Improving Safety and Supports in Correctional Facilities:

A. Staffing Reductions Hurt Safety and Rehabilitation:

According to the “*New York State Agency: Use of Overtime and State Workforce Trends, 2012-2022 Report*” generated by the Office of the New York State Comptroller, DOCCS continues to see a decrease in staffing. In 2022, DOCCS had 25,202 staff – this is 1,643 fewer staff than 2021. The Executive Budget indicates that DOCCS could reduce its staff by an additional 1,429 staff.

Year	Staff 2013	Staff 2021	Staff 2022	2022 vs. 2021 Difference	2022 vs. 2021 Percentage
DOCCS	30,162	26,845	25,202	-1,643	-6.5%

PEF is pleased that the incarcerated population continues to decline, but indicators on the health of the workforce at DOCCS tell a different story. In 2022, New York spent \$1.35 billion to fund 22 million hours of overtime. Only OPWDD used more overtime than DOCCS in 2022 (OPWDD had 6,205,208 overtime hours performed by state employees in 2022).

Total OT Hours Worked by DOCCS Staff

Year	2013	2021	2022	2021 vs. 2022 Difference	Difference
DOCCS	3,134,687	4,525,292	5,290,451	765,159	14.5%

B. Support Staffing and Other Policies to Protect and Support Incarcerated Individuals and Staff in Correctional Facilities

PEF members at DOCCS provide direct health, wellness, education and other services to the incarcerated population. These titles include nurses, rehabilitation specialists, mental health and addiction specialists and parole officers. Given our mutual goal of reducing the incarcerated population, we believe the state has a responsibility to expand the number and types of support staff that render mental health, wellness, education, training and addiction services so that

taxpayers can be comfortable knowing that the rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals is already happening in advance of what we all hope will be a successful release.

The Executive is indicating the current incarcerated population in state facilities is approximately 32,465 individuals. Below is a current census of the support staff serving these individuals:

PEF Support Professionals In Correctional Facilities

Title	1/1/2020	3/20/2023	Change from 2020
Nurses All Titles	719	595	-124
Teachers All Titles	362	274	-88
Vocational Education All Titles	284	269	-15

To support the laudable goal of supporting these individuals for a successful re-integration back into their communities, PEF feels strongly that the state must increase staff to provide greater support for success.

C. Other Policies Needed to Ensure Safety and Support for the Incarcerated Population

All New Yorkers support the humane treatment of all people in this state. Recent legislative changes ignore the need to provide humane treatment to all staff and all incarcerated individuals who face the on-going threat of assault by other incarcerated individuals and continued staffing reductions further hamper safety. This imbalance in approach has led to an increase in assaults against staff and other incarcerated individuals. The staff need tools to:

- (1) keep people safe so they can effectively address those few incarcerated individuals who have no respect or boundaries when it comes to the safety of their fellow incarcerated individuals and staff;
- (2) safely and effectively deliver needed services and support to foster a rehabilitative environment for the entire incarcerated population; and
- (3) provide secure, protective custody to incarcerated individuals who have been targeted.

Data released by DOCCS indicates that assaults and injuries against incarcerated individuals and staff are up significantly since this law was enacted in 2021 - assaults against incarcerated individuals are up 11% and assaults against staff are up 29% from 2020 to 2022, despite the incarcerated population shrinking by more than 20% during that time. The state needs to act to

maintain safety and security for all individuals within these institutions. PEF supports the following:

Policy Solutions:

- (1) Utilize the state’s excess correctional facility space to establish separate, segregated facilities for all incarcerated individuals and to provide protective custody options for those incarcerated individuals who have been targeted. This, in turn, will reduce the risks associated with overcrowding in some facilities and in facilities with high populations of violent felony offenders.
- (2) Expand the use of the “step down” program in both Residential Mental Health Unit (RMHU) programs and for those individuals remanded to Segregated Housing Units (SHU). The “step down” program, which was in operation just before the enactment of the HALT Act, allows incarcerated individuals to earn privileges and the use of fewer restraints based on exhibiting positive behaviors and for continued participation in and adherence to the program.
- (3) Invest in professional treatment staff to address mental, behavioral and other issues within the population.
- (4) Establish merit time eligibility for violent felony offenders so they can work toward early release. This type of merit system fosters understanding and helps shape positive behaviors.
- (5) Expand re-entry services by establishing programming for incarcerated individuals and parolees around mental health services, job training services, housing, etc.

OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES (OITS)

Information technology is a highly specialized field. Our members have initiated and developed amazing things for the state and its citizens. For example, more Department of Motor Vehicles transactions can now be conducted online. During and since the pandemic, OITS members have assisted other agencies in responding to increased demand for remote services. Our members have worked diligently to streamline access to services across agencies despite the fact that the state has not adequately filled vacancies caused by attrition and retirement. In fact, the state continues to heavily rely on expensive outside contractors to do the functions that should be performed by state employees. In SFY 2024, OITS used 469 FTE consultants at an average salary of \$165,800 per consultant. The state can realize financial saving by in-sourcing some of these positions.

Training

Instead of increasing the state's reliance on costly consultants, the most cost-effective option to enhance the state's IT infrastructure is to invest in the state workforce at OITS. Currently, the Executive Budget proposes an appropriation of \$1.7 million (down from \$2 million last year) at OITS to help staff achieve the specific certifications needed most to meet the state's needs (A.8800/S.8300 p. 451). We must ensure that this funding is increased to at least \$3 million and, more importantly, spent on its intended purpose so that the state can meet its needs with qualified, in-house professionals.

Additionally, too often outside contractors are not required to train state staff on the systems they are developing and/or implementing for state usage. The state should require that all contracts include provisions that require the training of IT staff on any applications purchased or leased by the state. This is a commonplace practice in private industry. This training is important in maintaining such systems, ensuring such applications align with agency procedures and protocols and that such tools are being utilized with maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

Artificial Intelligence

On January 8, 2024, OITS issued its "Acceptable Use of Artificial Intelligence Technologies" policy. PEF is generally supportive of this policy. Our members want to make sure that emerging technologies such as AI are used ethically and have appropriate levels of human input to assure that sensitive information is protected.

AI has or will impact everyone's life and livelihood. The deployment and utilization of AI is occurring in every facet of social, political and economic life. At this important juncture, the proliferation of AI and the lack of consistent and uniform federal or state regulation thereon should give policymakers great pause. While the use of AI is expanding exponentially across all platforms, there is no regulation or unified protocols or practices for entities that develop, distribute or use these systems. This has resulted in the formation and utilization of AI systems that operationalize and expand information systems that may generate outputs predicated on (1) inaccurate or limited data; (2) algorithmic bias; and/or (3) "black box" or non-transparent algorithmic processes.

In order to monitor and prevent these pitfalls, PEF has developed recommendations to highlight what responsible AI developers and users, including the state, should incorporate into their internal protocols and processes to ensure that: (1) real, identifiable and unbiased inputs are used to generate fair and informed outputs; (2) there is complete transparency for both users, consumers and others affected

by AI generated materials or outcomes; and (3) there is continued testing and oversight to protect data and the continued alignment of inputs and outputs generated through AI systems over time.

With regard to the acquisition, development and/or deployment of AI systems in state-operated agencies and/or entities, PEF recommends that the following protocols be adopted by the state, contractors employed by the state and/or systems purchased for use by the state:

(1) Collective Bargaining: Any AI system employed by the state that affects the state workforce needs to be bargained in accordance with any existing collective bargaining language with the goal of minimizing workplace interruption, worker displacement and ensuring appropriate upskilling and training for new and existing staff. AI should be used to increase efficiency, not to replace human decision-making on issues affecting service delivery. No AI system designed to monitor, oversee, evaluate or otherwise perform the functions of existing state managers should be allowed without the full knowledge and approval of the union(s) representing such employees.

(2) Transparency and Accountability Controls: AI tools and systems pose unique challenges in accountability as their inputs and operations are not always visible. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) noted that a lack of transparency reduces effective oversight in identifying errors, misuse, and bias. Therefore, it is essential to establish governance structures over AI to ensure that its use is transparent and accurate and does not generate harmful, unintended consequences.

(3) Consistent Policies Across All Agencies: All state agencies should have consistent policies and approaches toward AI and should identify key risks and create processes to address those risks. These policies should apply to state applications and those procured from outside contractors. The contracts for all AI applications that are purchased or acquired from outside providers should require significant staff training and in-house oversight. All AI policies should be consistent with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)'s Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework (AI RMF).

(4) Comprehensive Inventory of AI Tools: All state agencies should be mandated to keep an inventory of AI tools and establish a reporting framework of AI tools, policies, and protocols for public review, as the NYC government did by Executive Order #50 of 2019.

(5) Establish Task Force to Review Implementation and Impact: The state should establish a task force that includes all stakeholders, including staff, the public, scholars and managers, to provide recommendations for how the state can use automated decision systems (ADS), which are a type of AI that make or assist in making decisions that affect people, in a fair and accountable manner. The state should look into The New York City Automated Decision Systems Task Force (ADS Task Force) which

was established by Local Law 49 of 2018 and was tasked with recommending a process for reviewing the city's use of automated decision systems (more commonly known as algorithms).

(6) Establish Single Statewide Oversight Officer for AI: The state should create a Central Governance Entity as Director of Artificial Intelligence, as has been done within NYC's Office of Innovation & Technology entrusted with the following tasks:

- (a) Developing and adopting a statewide AI policy framework that defines the core values and principles for responsible and trustworthy AI.
- (b) Creating and implementing an AI review process that evaluates the potential benefits and risks of AI applications, as well as their alignment with the state's goals and values.
- (c) Establishing and enforcing an AI accountability mechanism that monitors and audits the performance and impact of AI applications, as well as provides mechanisms for redress and remedy.
- (d) Providing guidance and support for state agencies and partners on how to design, develop, and use AI in an ethical and effective manner, such as by creating toolkits, checklists, and training programs.
- (e) Engaging with external experts and stakeholders on the ethical implications of AI, such as by forming an AI advisory board, hosting public forums, and soliciting feedback from diverse communities.

(7) Review and Adhere to Existing Policies in Other Jurisdictions: The state should leverage existing resources and best practices from other sources, such as the OECD Principles on AI, the EU Guidelines for Trustworthy AI, and the NYC Automated Decision Systems Task Force Report. The state should collaborate with state agencies, academic institutions, industry partners, and civil society organizations to develop and disseminate these guidelines.

(8) Ongoing Oversight and Analysis on Inputs, Information Generation and Impact: The state should also use the following toolkit developed for making AI trustworthy, reliable, responsible, secure, fair, and ethical:

- (a) The Algorithmic Impact Assessment Framework by the AI Now Institute: The Algorithmic Impact Assessment Framework is a tool developed by the AI Now Institute to evaluate the potential impact of artificial intelligence systems on society, particularly in terms of fairness, accountability, and transparency.

- (b) The Responsible AI Toolkit by Accenture: It is a comprehensive set of resources and guidelines for organizations to develop and implement responsible AI practices.
- (c) The Ethical OS Toolkit by Omidyar Network: This is a set of resources created by Omidyar Network to help tech companies and developers identify and mitigate potential ethical risks and challenges in their products and services.

(9) Data Protection and the Protection of Intellectual Property: It is critical that the state work to protect the sensitive data it collects and maintains from abuse or release. The inappropriate usage or release of such data has broad implications on the state and taxpayers. It is equally important for the state to ensure appropriate protocols are in place to prohibit or limit AI systems from utilizing or otherwise infringing on the intellectual property of others. These issues are only now being brought to court for consideration and these issues could have broad implications on the state in the future.

(10) Protections Against Bias in Employment, Inappropriate Oversight and Discipline and Other Decision-making Processes: The state should enact legislation similar to NYC Local Law #144 that prohibits employers or employment agencies from using an automated employment decision tool (AEDT) to make an employment decision unless the tool is audited for bias annually. Additionally, AI systems should not be deployed unilaterally by management to monitor or otherwise evaluate staff outside of the collective bargaining process. PEF has successfully negotiated language that requires management and the union to form a joint committee to study the implications of AI on the workforce with the goal of implementing this technology for the benefit of staff and the state of New York. This is an important step in the appropriate implementation of this technology across the state.

(11) Individual Accountability: Any decision based on an AI tool should not absolve the decisionmaker from his or her responsibility or ownership of such decision. While the Statewide Oversight Officer for AI should be charged with guiding the state's development, procurement or utilization of AI applications, as well as conduct periodic reviews and oversight, state officers and managers in agencies deploying this technology must bear the responsibility for the reliable, responsible, secure, fair and ethical decisions recommended by AI systems in their agencies.

The continued evolution and deployment of AI has great potential and great risks for the state as an employer and as a regulator. PEF appreciates the work of these committees in beginning the process for developing and harnessing this technology for the good of all New Yorkers. It is imperative, however, given the rapidly increasing utilization of this technology that the state move quickly in developing the

regulatory framework needed to protect New Yorkers from the harm this technology could cause without appropriate safeguards.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

Wayne Spence

President