



May 6, 2022

Testimony of Acting Commissioner Laura Kavanagh, FDNY
Fire Department Executive Budget Hearing

Good morning Chair Ariola, Chair Brannan, and all Council Members present. My name is Laura Kavanagh and I am the Acting Commissioner of the New York City Fire Department. I am joined today by John Hodgens, the Acting Chief of Department for FDNY; Jonathan Pistilli, Assistant Chief of EMS; and Lizette Christoff, Deputy Commissioner for Budget and Finance. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the Mayor's Executive Budget and its impact on the Fire Department.

I'd like to begin my testimony by acknowledging the passing of Firefighter Timothy Klein, who died twelve days ago as he battled a fire in a Brooklyn home. Tragically, that fire also claimed the life of Carlos Richards, a 21 year old resident of the home. Firefighter Klein grew up in Queens, and his family has a proud history of serving in the FDNY. Six and a half years ago he became a firefighter, following in the footsteps of his father, uncles, and cousins. He was passionate about his work, and members he served with say that he loved to volunteer his time to improve the lives of others and that he never missed a chance to help. That's what he was doing in his final moments – braving danger to help others. He dedicated his life to service, spending his free time with a charitable organization that performed construction to make homes more accessible. He completed his most recent project only a week before his death, building a ramp at a residence

to make life a little easier for a young man with Cerebral Palsy. The FDNY family is mourning the loss of Firefighter Klein, but his legacy will live on as we honor his example by dedicating ourselves to helping others and serving the community.

The Mayor's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2023 provides steady support for the Fire Department. We are grateful to Mayor Adams for his focus on public safety and his support of the Fire Department. The Fiscal Year 2023 budget for the Fire Department is approximately 2.3 billion dollars. This reflects 137 million dollars in additional funds provided as part of the Executive Budget, the largest component of which is a transfer from the labor reserve of 83 million dollars for settled labor contracts.

The next largest addition of expense funding is 37 million dollars for the Behavioral Health Emergency Assistance Response Division, or B-HEARD, program. B-HEARD reflects the City's new approach to individuals experiencing a mental health emergency. In this program, EMS members work alongside colleagues from Health & Hospitals, in coordination with the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health to provide care and coordinate support for patients presenting with mental health and substance use challenges. The responses prioritize de-escalation and providing health-centered responses to mental health emergencies. The money provided for in the Executive Budget funds continuation of the current pilot program as well as expansion into additional neighborhoods and, most significantly, mental health training for all members of EMS and the related collectively bargained differential.

The Executive Budget also provides funding for life safety equipment and supplies in FY23 and out years. That amount – 4.4 million dollars a year – will go towards general unit price increases plus equipment such as self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) facepieces. The Executive Budget also contains money for Department needs associated with IT projects; money for leases of FDNY facilities; and upward adjustments to energy and fuel costs.

In addition, the budget provides for several capital new needs. The largest capital item is 135 million dollars for apparatus floor replacements. Our firehouses are quite old and this money will allow us to address critical needs. The Fire Department also received capital funding for other needs such as the establishment of a data center at PSAC 2 in the Bronx, the replacement of chillers at two of our Communications Offices, ladder refurbishments, and funding to bridge shortfalls at EMS Station 17 and Engine Company 268.

Over the last few months, the Fire Department has experienced some very difficult days. The loss of Firefighter Klein is the latest reminder of the dangers that FDNY firefighters and EMS members face every time they answer a call. They do so day in and day out – despite the risk to themselves – because their mission is to protect the people of New York and they have never let our city down. That work is possible because of the support that the Department receives from Mayor Adams and from the City Council. It is also the result of our extensive interaction with members of the community, through multilingual Fire Safety Education events and CPR demonstrations, and a wide assortment of diverse public safety messaging. We are very appreciative of the resources that the Fire Department is receiving in the Mayor’s Executive

Budget. With this support, the Department will continue our mission, learning from difficult days and providing the highest level of service possible to the people of New York.