

**New York State Governor Kathy Hochul
Testimony before the
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
June 12, 2025**

Chairman Comer, Ranking Member Lynch, and distinguished Members of the Committee:
Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss New York's immigration policies and our efforts to manage the recent influx of migrants to our state.

Before turning to the substance of my testimony, I want to acknowledge the passing of Ranking Member Gerry Connolly. I had the honor of serving with him in Congress; his voice, leadership, and deep commitment to public service will be sorely missed.

Let me start by laying out my views on immigration—simply and directly. Our borders must be secure. Our nation needs Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform. New York State cooperates with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in criminal cases. And our values as New Yorkers demand that we treat those who arrive here in search of a better life with dignity and reject policies that tear law-abiding families apart.

For 400 years, New York Harbor has welcomed those seeking freedom and opportunity. The Statue of Liberty stands not merely as a monument of bronze and steel, but as a living testament to our deepest values: that America's strength lies in its embrace of those who arrive with nothing but hope and a willingness to work hard.

As I will explain today, we are a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. These two values form the very foundation of America. New York continues to be a place where immigrants have the opportunity to prosper, just like those whose families have been here for generations.

This is personal for me. My grandparents fled Ireland as teenagers who faced poverty so extreme that staying meant starvation. My grandfather became a migrant farm worker in the wheat fields of South Dakota—the only work available among the many businesses with signs that read, “Irish Need Not Apply.” Later, my grandparents became domestic servants, working for a family so cruel that one night my grandmother escaped through a bedroom window. They eventually found their way to Buffalo, and my grandfather secured work in a steel plant. It was hot, dirty, and dangerous work, but he was proud to support his eight children. My father worked at that same plant, raising six kids while attending college at night. That education changed everything for my family.

During my time as Governor, New York has managed an unprecedented humanitarian crisis while simultaneously becoming safer and stronger. We have done this not by abandoning our fundamental principles, but by embracing them—welcoming those who contribute, while holding accountable anyone who threatens public safety.

When I look at the people arriving today, I see the same determination and hope my grandparents carried. They did not travel thousands of miles to depend on government

assistance. Just like my grandfather, they came here to work. They want to contribute to our society and build a better future for their children.

I. NEW YORK’S RESPONSE TO THE MIGRANT CRISIS

Immigration is fundamentally a federal issue. But the influx of migrants and asylum-seekers we saw across the United States caused New York and other states to shoulder the burden of a broken immigration system.

Since Spring 2022, over 220,000 migrants have arrived in New York City—often fleeing violence and persecution in their home countries—seeking shelter, clothing, and food. More have likely come without seeking government assistance, so the actual number may be even higher. The scale of this influx placed enormous strain on state resources. In response to this crisis that originated with the federal government, coupled with the lack of assistance from the federal government, I deployed 2,000 National Guard members to support local efforts and, in partnership with New York City, opened over 200 temporary shelters and relief centers.

We have responded to this crisis with both compassion and pragmatism. And as a result, we largely prevented what could have become an additional crisis—one of street homelessness and tent cities. We made targeted investments not just to provide temporary shelter but also to create pathways to self-sufficiency.

Most migrants did not come here to rely on government assistance. They came here to work. I have said it for years: work authorization is the way out of this crisis. But federal inaction continues to block that path forward. New York has over 400,000 job openings and thousands of employers eager to hire migrants authorized to work. These are jobs in our restaurant kitchens, hotels, and health care facilities. They are on our farms and construction sites.

We do not want to let these jobs sit vacant, stalling New York’s economy, or let farm crops wither when they could feed American children. We should not let small businesses struggle to find employees when capable newcomers sit in taxpayer-funded shelters, unable to earn a living.

Let them work. Let them contribute. Let them chase the American dream—just like my grandparents, and many of yours.

II. COORDINATION WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The term “sanctuary jurisdiction” means different things to different people. Let me tell you about New York State’s policies and laws. We have long cooperated with federal immigration authorities in criminal matters, including helping the federal government deport people who have committed crimes, and helping identify and locate members of criminal organizations, cartels, and terrorist groups. This has been true for a long time, regardless of which party is in power in Washington.

Through the New York State Fusion Center, our State Police cooperate whenever a federal agency requests support for an active criminal investigation. That includes ICE, Homeland Security Investigations, Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), the Federal Bureau of Investigations,

and various others. When it comes to helping our federal partners track down violent criminals, gun runners, drug dealers, and human traffickers, our commitment is unwavering.

Further, the New York State Police assist with border security and drug interdiction. We share data from license plate readers and drone technology. Federal law enforcement, including CBP, is represented in the Fusion Center and can gain access to and information from our records systems in relation to active criminal cases. We have expanded our efforts to secure our northern border. This includes surveillance, intelligence gathering and sharing, and, ultimately, interdiction.

When individuals who enter the country illegally commit crimes in New York, I want them arrested and tried—and, if convicted, imprisoned and deported. Simply sending people back to their home countries without any accountability does not prevent them from trying to return, and it does not make us safer.

This is why our Department of Corrections and Community Supervision provides ICE with information on non-citizen incarcerated individuals before they complete their sentences, so that federal agents can make arrangements to take these criminals into custody and begin deportation proceedings. Since I became Governor, the state of New York has initiated transfers of more than 1,300 individuals to ICE upon completion of their sentences—some of whom ICE has failed to pick up for deportation. We would be happy to work with the federal government to better address this.

But we have to draw a line somewhere. New York cannot deputize our state officers to enforce civil immigration violations, such as overstaying a visa. That is the responsibility of the federal government, which has far more personnel and resources dedicated to immigration enforcement. Our troopers are focused on keeping New Yorkers safe: removing illegal guns from our streets, patrolling highways, and interdicting illegal drug trafficking. We need them doing the jobs that keep our communities safe. We simply do not have the capacity to do the federal government's job.

We are also committed to keeping New Yorkers safe through common-sense policies that improve public safety without undermining trust in law enforcement. One such policy, which has been consistently mischaracterized, is New York's Green Light Law. Its purpose is to ensure drivers on our roads are licensed and insured, making everyone safer. Similar laws exist in 19 states across the country and have been proven to reduce hit-and-runs and uninsured motorist claims. The law includes privacy protection because we want people to get licensed without fear and in turn make our roads safer for all travelers.

And just as we believe all drivers should be licensed and insured, we also believe all people deserve to be treated with dignity. The vast majority of immigrants in New York, regardless of status, come seeking a better life. And in a just society, protecting public safety should never come at the expense of human dignity.

A recent story deeply troubles me. On March 27 of this year, in the rural town of Sackets Harbor, masked ICE agents stormed a family's home before dawn, abducting a mother and three

children, including a third grader. The father, already out working at a dairy farm, arrived home to find his family had vanished.

This family was not even the intended target of the operation. They were so-called collateral arrests, suddenly and unjustly cast into a living hell. I was outraged. But I was not alone. In Jefferson County, where more than 60 percent of voters supported Donald Trump, the response was swift and bipartisan. Schoolchildren asked where their classmates had gone. Neighbors protested in the streets. Republican Assemblymember Scott Gray spoke out. So did Jay Matteson from the Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency, local farm owner Ron Robbins, and educators at Sackets Harbor Central School, whose principal publicly condemned the raid. This was a human reaction, not a partisan one. People recognized that what happened was wrong—that a mother and her children deserved compassion, not cruelty.

Finally, after nearly two weeks, the family was returned to New York. Their community, regardless of political affiliation, rallied around them, because they all recognized the fundamental cruelty of what had happened.

This is not the America we want to be. We can maintain public safety without tearing children away from their parents. And it is imperative that we do—because behind every policy decision are real children, families, and communities.

III. PUBLIC SAFETY IN NEW YORK

When I took office in 2021, I made it clear: keeping people safe is my top priority. My administration invested more than \$2.6 billion in proven public safety initiatives. And those investments are working. New York is a safe place to live, work, and raise a family.

Among America's ten most populous cities, New York City now has the second lowest crime rate—lower than many cities that are not so-called sanctuary jurisdictions:

- Comparing the first five months of the year, murders are down 41 percent since 2021 and 28 percent year-over-year.
- Over the same period, shootings are down 54 percent since 2021 and 21 percent year-over-year.
- In the first five months of 2025, murders and shootings hit their lowest level in recorded history, and last month was the safest May on record in New York City.
- Subway crime is at a 15-year low.

Statewide, a similar story emerges: New York has the lowest homicide rate among the ten largest states, and our homicide rate is about half the national average.

These are not just statistics. They represent millions of real people who are safer today than they were even before the pandemic.

We have made these strides by going after the root causes of crime, using a data-driven and hyper-targeted approach, with close coordination between local, state, and federal law enforcement—rather than engaging in indiscriminate roundups or mass deportations that tear apart families and communities while doing little to enhance public safety.

IV. CONCLUSION

As Governor, my number one job is keeping New Yorkers safe. That is precisely why I have invested in unprecedented crime reduction strategies and bolstered law enforcement resources across our state, with crime declining significantly under my leadership as a result. It is also why we coordinate with federal authorities on active criminal cases to put dangerous people behind bars, and, if they are not here legally, deport them. But New Yorkers know the difference between protecting public safety and abject displays of cruelty.

Throughout our history as a country, every wave of immigrants has faced skepticism and fear. Yet time and time again, these newcomers have proven themselves to be among our hardest workers, our most innovative thinkers, and our most patriotic citizens. Immigrants helped build New York. They are part of our past, our present, and our future. I have seen what happens when people get a fair shot. I told you about my grandparents earlier. They worked hard, played by the rules, and gave their kids a better life.

That is the same dream I see in the eyes of migrant families arriving in our state today. They are not asking for a handout. They are just asking for a shot. But let me be clear about where I draw the line: if someone comes to New York and commits a crime, they will be punished. No one gets a free pass.

We face a choice today about who we are as a nation. Will we remain true to the ideals inscribed on the Statue of Liberty that stands proud in our harbor? There is no doubt in my mind that we can keep our communities safe while also honoring our heritage as a beacon of hope and opportunity. That is the promise of America—and it is up to all of us to make sure we keep it.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.