



June 1, 2026

Testimony of Commissioner Lillian Bonsignore, FDNY
“Executive Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2027”

Good morning Chair Ariola and members of the Fire & Emergency Management Committee.

My name is Lillian Bonsignore and I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the executive budget for the Fire Department. I am joined by First Deputy Commissioner Daniel Flynn; Chief of Department John Esposito; Chief of EMS Paul Miano; Deputy Commissioner of Management and Budget Lizette Christoff; Chief of Fire Operations Kevin Woods, Chief of Fire Prevention Thomas Currao, and Associate Commissioner of Workforce Development Nafeesah Noonan.

This coming Wednesday is FDNY Medal Day, which is an event that we hold each year on the steps of City Hall to recognize the lifesaving efforts of FDNY members. Before we get into the dollars and cents of the Fiscal Year 2027 budget, I would like to briefly highlight way that Fire Department funding translates in a tangible way to real world services.

Among this year’s medal recipients will be Firefighter John Palmer from Ladder 144. In the early morning hours on September 12, 2025, Ladder 144 responded second-due to a reported fire in a two-story flat roof PD in College Point. When they arrived at the fire, a woman said that her father was trapped inside. Firefighter Palmer and the inside team masked up and made their way to the second floor where they were met with high heat and zero visibility. At the top of the

stairs, they encountered a locked apartment door that was difficult to force, given the fire conditions and the size of the landing. Working with a fellow member of Ladder 144, Firefighter Palmer was able to force open the door and begin a search inside the apartment. He located an inward-opening door and found an unconscious 65-year-old man lying on his back on the floor of what Firefighter Palmer determined was a bathroom. Working with Firefighter Rafael Hernandez, they were able to remove the unresponsive man to the exterior landing where he was passed off to others and received emergency medical care outside of the building. For saving a life under extraordinarily challenging circumstances, Firefighter Palmer will be receiving the Probationary Firefighter Thomas A. Wylie Medal.

A second medal recipient this year is EMS Deputy Chief Joseph Nocerino. Chief Nocerino was on his way to work early one morning last December when he spotted smoke and diverted his route to investigate. In the Coney Island Section of Brooklyn, he discovered a home engulfed in flames. After calling in the incident and requesting resources to the scene, he entered the building, braving smoke and flames to alert building occupants. After clearing the first and second floor, he closed the interior door to slow the spread of the fire. Upon arrival of fire units, Chief Nocerino provided information to the members to assist in attacking the fire and then coordinated an 18-unit EMS response, organizing a variety of specialized personnel and ensuring that the civilians he had evacuated received appropriate care. For risking his own safety to rescue members of the public, he will be receiving the Chief Ulyses Grant Leadership Medal. In addition to Firefighter Palmer and Chief Nocerino, 50 of their firefighting and EMS colleagues will be receiving medals for heroic acts of bravery.

As to the numbers themselves, I am pleased to report that Mayor Mamdani's Executive Budget provides the Fire Department with an expansion of resources in several areas. It calls for significant civilian headcount restoration, providing \$748,000 in FY26 and approximately \$9 million in FY27. This funding amounts to 84 individuals and we anticipate that it will go towards bolstering several units, including facilities maintenance, information technology, and procurement.

The Fire Department will also receive an increase in headcount within the Bureau of Fire Prevention. As part of the Streamlining Procedures to Expedite Equitable Development (SPEED) Taskforce, the Department will receive \$1.3 million in FY26 and out years to hire 11 staff members for the Fire Alarm Plan Review and Inspection Unit and three staff members for the Emergency Planning and Preparedness Group. These additions will help the units process plan applications, speed up inspections, and help the Bureau more efficiently process requests from members of the public who are looking to open a new business, renovate an existing business, or build new facilities.

This budget also includes a restoration to the Fire Department and an expansion of the Behavioral Health Emergency Assistance Response Division. Known as BHEARD, this program is part of New York City's commitment to use a health-centered approach to individuals experiencing mental health crises. The budget reverses the previous administration's decision to transfer funding away from the Fire Department and provides funding of nearly \$2 million in FY26 and approximately \$4.8 million in FY27, \$6 million in FY28, and \$6.7 million in FY29 and out.

The Mayor's Executive Budget also includes numerous smaller adjustments to technical initiatives. This includes additional funding for motor fuel, heating fuel, utilities, and lease adjustments. On the capital side, we also received a new need of \$24.3 million to support six roof and waterproofing projects and \$6.75 million in FY27 to support the purchase of 15 emergency response vehicles. In addition to new capital funding, we also received accelerations of out-year capital funding in the upcoming two years of the capital plan to enable the Department to move forward on critical projects and purchases, including: \$16 million across FY27 and FY28 to replace emergency support vehicles; \$11.7 million in FY27 to expand fleet maintenance capacity; \$1.7 million in FY27 and \$10.1 million in FY28 for multi-component renovations at EMS Station 4; \$10.5 million in FY27 to replace the apparatus floor at Engine Company 163; and \$6.8 million in FY27 to replace our air compressors at the Mask Services Unit.

When I was here for the Department's Preliminary Budget Hearing, we spoke about the Department's Savings Plan and our determination to save taxpayer money without negatively affecting fire or EMS operations. I am gratified that the Mayor's Executive Budget accomplishes this by creating three areas of savings that do not affect operations or negatively impact Fire Department members.

The first initiative increases EMS revenue by enabling the Department to collect payment for "treatment in place." Under existing practice, if an ambulance responded to a medical call, provided treatment, stabilized the patient, but the patient ultimately decided to refuse transportation to the hospital, the Department was entirely unable to bill for that care. However,

Medicaid will soon begin reimbursing emergency medical service providers for the provision of care without transport, and the Fire Department will begin collecting payment for treatment in place and seeing the benefits of this practice.

The second component of the Department's Savings Plan is a periodic increase in EMS ambulance fees. Ambulance rates are adjusted every few years based on the actual cost of operating EMS. These rates were last adjusted about three years ago. The current rate proposal reflects cost updates experienced since that time. This includes a variety of increases in costs borne by the Department, including but not limited to: spending on auto parts, maintenance staff, IT support staff and maintenance agreements, costs associated with the purchase of vehicles, and EMS labor costs. We understand that these costs may present a challenge for some patients, and we have programs for self-pay patients who are unable to pay their bill. This includes a charity care program as well as a settlement program.

Finally, the third savings initiative identified achieves savings of approximately \$800,000 in FY26 and \$2.2 million in FY27 and out through renegotiation of our telecommunications contracts. We achieved this savings by finding efficiencies and reducing costs. As a mayoral agency, we strive to be good stewards of municipal funding, providing the best possible service to the public and not spending unnecessarily. With this Savings Plan, we believe that we've achieved the appropriate balance.

I want to thank Chair Ariola for your ongoing assistance and support. I have now met with every member of the Fire and Emergency Management Committee, and I've had a chance to see many

of you in your own districts and learn about the different needs and priorities of the neighborhoods that you represent. Our efforts to protect New Yorkers are strengthened when we coordinate with our government partners, as we have with the recent upward trend of fatal fires in the Bronx. I am encouraged by the passion and the enthusiasm of this committee, and I have confidence that we'll achieve great gains by working together.

I am pleased that this Executive Budget provides funding that expands our operations and restores critical personnel who support and carry out those operations. This budget will enhance the Fire Department's service of the public, both from a regulatory and preventative standpoint as well as from a critical lifesaving emergency standpoint. We have achieved savings without harming our ability to carry out our mission of protecting life and property, and we strive to provide the best possible service to the people of New York.

I would be happy to answer your questions at this time.