**OFFICE OF THE PHILADELPHIA SHERIFF**  
**FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET TESTIMONY**  
**MAY 6, 2025**

**INTRODUCTION**

Good afternoon, Council President Johnson and Members of City Council. It is both an honor and a privilege to appear before you today. I am Rochelle Bilal, Sheriff for the City and County of Philadelphia. Joining me today are Tariq El-Shabazz, Undersheriff; Jamison Rogers, Chief of Staff; Patrick Lee, Chief Financial Officer; Craig Martin, Sr., Chief Budget Officer; Chief Deputy of Court Operations Sean Thornton; Inspector William Hans(Family Court and transportation); Inspector Sean Marshall, Sr. (Internal Affairs Division and Training Bureau); Inspector David Fallen (Civil Enforcement); Inspector Joshua Perez (City Hall and Widener Building); Inspector Nicole Nobles (Warrant and Bike Units); and IT Manager Eric Chambers.

On behalf of my entire team, I want to thank you for your continued partnership and support in our shared mission to keep Philadelphia safe, secure, and thriving. It’s a true privilege to stand alongside such dedicated public servants as we work together to strengthen our communities.

**Plans for Fiscal Year 2026:**

As we move forward into Fiscal Year 2026, our office’s main objectives are aligned with the **Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia**, which is an initiative that remains at the heart of our efforts. Our mission is to **execute all orders from the 1st Judicial District Courts**, and to continue our work of deploying personnel to return excess proceeds from property sales to citizens, helping them access economic opportunities like homeownership.

Our office stands ready to **enhance public safety**, particularly in line with Mayor Parker’s vision for a **safer, greener, and cleaner City**. The **Philadelphia Sheriff’s Office** has made significant contributions to this vision, particularly through our work with the **Civil Enforcement and Warrant Units**, who have been instrumental in apprehending fugitives, working in partnership with the **District Attorney’s Office** and **Philadelphia Police**. This collaboration is essential in keeping our streets safe and ensuring the court system operates smoothly.

Additionally, **the Sheriff’s Office has played a critical role in our elections security efforts**, stepping up to meet the demand for more trained law enforcement officers during the elections of 2024. This service was invaluable in helping ensure a smooth, safe process for our citizens.

However, as we continue to evolve and grow, we face challenges. **Our deputy salaries are not competitive with other counties within Pennsylvania**, and this disparity has made it increasingly difficult for us to retain high-quality deputies, especially given the increased demand for our services.

**The Need for a Local Sheriff's Academy:**

One of the greatest challenges we face as an office is the **time-consuming and costly requirement** for our deputies to travel to and attend the Pennsylvania Sheriff’s Academy at State College. This 19 Week program, while essential, presents significant barriers for many in our communities, particularly for individuals with families or other local commitments. This process results in a **delay in the training of deputies**.

Therefore, I propose we explore the establishment of a **local Sheriff’s Academy** here in Philadelphia. A **local academy would allow us to shorten the training period**, enhance the accessibility of the program for diverse communities, and most importantly, **speed up the hiring process**. This initiative would enable us to hire and train deputies on a more **consistent, rolling basis**, rather than being restricted to only one or two training cycle per year. This would greatly benefit both our office and the city, ensuring that we can meet the growing demands of law enforcement while providing stable, well-trained professionals to serve our citizens.

**Technology Integration and Community Engagement:**

To address these challenges, **expanding the role of technology in our operations is essential**. One of the most promising developments is our **partnership with Tyler Technologies**, which will enhance **transparency** by allowing us to track **receipts, voided transactions, and disbursement accounts** with greater accuracy. Additionally, the implementation of the **LiveScan Plus System**—an **advanced mobile fingerprinting and biometric recognition tool**—will significantly improve **real-time identification** of individuals with outstanding warrants. This technology enables deputies to perform **field-based warrant checks and identifications**, reducing delays and increasing **public safety** by closing **critical gaps in the execution of judicial orders**.

In the coming year, we are also looking to **expand our Bike and K-9 Units**, which will provide a more visible presence around **the courts** and **City Hall**, as these units currently have been serving our citizens throughout the city. This increased presence is part of our larger vision to help **improve safety and strengthen community trust** through visible, proactive law enforcement.

I am also proud to announce several key initiatives we’ve undertaken in our community engagement efforts. **We are working closely with Councilmembers Dr. Ahmad and Quetcy Lozada** to host **upcoming events aimed at increasing hiring opportunities for both the AAPI and Latino communities**, demonstrating our commitment to engaging with Philadelphia’s diverse population and providing opportunities for all.

We are also committed to enhancing the health and well-being of our communities. In 2024, we were honored to host **free healthcare pop-up clinics** that provided much-needed medical services to underserved communities throughout Philadelphia. These efforts represent our broader commitment to not only protecting citizens in the courts but supporting their well-being in all aspects of life.

Additionally, in a groundbreaking move for public safety, I am proud to announce that **the Philadelphia Sheriff’s Office is now the first law enforcement agency in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to be certified in autism awareness**. This important certification required our sworn and professional staff to undergo specialized training and pass an assessment, ensuring we are better equipped to serve individuals with autism and their families.

**Closing Remarks:**

With your support, I know we can achieve these goals together. We are committed to working in partnership with the City Council and all stakeholders to move Philadelphia forward and ensure a brighter, safer future for all our citizens. We look forward to continuing these efforts and to further engaging with our communities through the various initiatives we’ve outlined today.

Finally, I must address an important issue: earlier this year, we learned that last year’s budget proposal was not properly placed, and as a result, it was not given full consideration. This is something that must be addressed so we can ensure our current fiscal year proposal is properly considered. I trust that this process will be handled professionally and honorably, ensuring that the needs of the Sheriff's Office are met and that we can continue to provide the critical services our city demands.

Thank you for your time and attention. We look forward to answering any questions you may have.

# Proposed Budget Overview & Other Budget Drivers

[Budget will insert the Excel tables: *financial summary by class, contracts summary (Professional Services only), and Total M/W/DSBE Contract Participation Goal*. Some departments may also want to provide financial summary tables for other funds, such as the Grants Fund.]

**Proposed Funding Request**:

The proposed Fiscal Year 2026 General Fund budget totals $54,175,558.0 an INCREASE of $10,989,096.00 over Fiscal Year 2025 estimated obligation levels. This INCREASE is primarily due to:

This INCREASE is primarily due to an increase in class 100, Employee compensation, due to the staff needed. This increase is essential due to the understaffing of uniformed and non-unformed employees. This will increase our potential to adequately perform the duties of the Sheriff’s office. For class 200 Purchases of services, which entail professional services, improved technology, and computer augmentation. For class 300 and 400 for Material supplies, new vehicle purchase, and equipment, which includes needed tactical gear.

The proposed budget includes:

* $41,914,920.00 in Class 100, a $6,486,872.00 increase from FY25. This increase will cover the need for uniformed and non-unformed staff. This will include at least 400 uniformed employees to man all duties, and positions that are understaffed. To improve the security of the courts, and to assist PPD, when called upon. This will allow the office to assist in reducing outstanding warrants, man all the buildings under the Sheriff’s responsibility, assist in reducing guns on the street, and perform the civil responsibilities of the office.
* In addition to supporting the uniform personnel, the non-uniformed personnel, of 119, is necessary. Areas of need are accounting and finance, to adequately keep the office in full financial control. I.T. staff that is essential in our computer augmentation. Our office is years behind in accounting, finance, and computer software. In addition, we have need for sufficient real estate employees, to ensure that our Sheriff sales in handled properly.
* $6,404,463 in Class 200, A $1,107,460.00 INCREASE OVER FY25. In class 211 Transportation cost pays for deputy travel in the line of duty, transporting prisoners, and serving warrants. Which is part of the goal of this administration to reduce outstanding warrants. This funding will pay for a commercial software license and software in class 216. It will pay for the professional services needed. Such as Tyler Tech, which is essential for our computer augmentation, and for computers and major software for the system. These expenses are accounted for in class 250 and 251.
* Class 300/400, a $3,394,764.00 INCREASE OVER FY25. This funding will [Cover electrical and communication expenses, in class 310. Fire Fighting and Safety in class 312, which is a major increase of $634,208.00 which covers our tactical gear. For every deputy that is hired this is the expense that fully outfits the deputy for duty. This includes firearms, vests, shoes, uniform, tasers, and riot gear. In the past the Sheriff’s Deputies have not adequately been supplied with riot gear.
* The expense is absolutely necessary and is a must for each deputy. Class 313 is for food. This is the liquid portion that is separated from the food itself. The Sheriff’s Office is responsible for feeding and providing water for all prisoners in transport, hence this expense is necessary to follow the mandates that are the responsibilities of the office. In addition, class 345, gasoline, fuel cost for Sheriff Vehicles. In the future with the approval of the ordering of new vehicles, the office can request electrical vehicles which would make the expense less.
* In class 400, this includes $148,128.00 in supplies, office equipment, furniture, and fixtures. Class 428 will cover new vehicle acquisition. For current vehicles that are in mechanical deterioration interior and exterior, $558,000.00. Our vehicles operate 24 hours a day and are called upon to support the Philadelphia Police Department in all major events and protests. For Civil Enforcement Expansion Service, $1,050,000.00 for an additional 20 vehicles, to execute

# Staffing Levels

The department is requesting [519 budgeted positions for FY26, an increase of 186 positions over 333 positions from FY24. The INCREASE is attributed to one hundred and thirty-seven uniform positions and forty-nine civilian positions. The uniformed positions are needed in all areas, the courts, City Hall, and various locations, including our bikes and canine units. Deputies will be called on to assist PPD, for conventions, and crowd control, in the event there are protests. To increase the foot Patrol units on the streets. To maintain adequate staff in the event of retirements and those in the drop program. To man the various polling locations during the elections, if needed, which will be essential this upcoming election, prisoner transport, and to help reduce the outstanding warrants in the city. To have sufficient staff to be a part of the pipeline of law enforcement agencies with the city, state, and federal government law enforcement officers.

[Budget will insert the Excel table: *employment levels*]

# New Hires

[Budget will insert the Excel table: *new hires*]

# Program based budgeting: [Office of the Philadelphia Sheriff]

**FY26 Proposed General Fund:** 60,039,430.00

**Program Description:** The Sheriff’s Office is committed to service, procedural justice, and the sanctity of human life. As the law enforcement arm for the First Judicial District (FJD) and surrounding agencies, its’ duties as law enforcement professionals encompass protecting the lives, property, and rights of all people within a framework of service, uncompromising integrity, fiscal responsibility, professionalism, vigilance, and bias-free conduct. This mission is achieved through the execution of:

* + Court Operations
  + Civil Enforcement Operations
  + Real Estate Operations
  + Fugitive Warrant Unit Deployment
* **FY26 Strategic Goals:**
* Recruiting: Introduce policy modification to obtain open ended candidate lists from OHR.
* Training: Establish a local training academy for prospective candidates.
* Administration: Acquisition of additional office space for hiring both sworn and civilian staff; Enhance IT infrastructure by acquiring software for operations and historical reporting; Acquisition of new vehicles to replace 25+ vehicles scheduled for disposal.

**FY26 Performance Measures:** [Budget will insert *performance measures table(s)* from the Five Year Plan]

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| **Measure** | **FY24 Actual** | **FY25 Target** | **FY26 Target** |
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Other Budgetary Impacts

**Federal and State (Where Applicable)**

Our office relies on an operating budget from the City of Philadelphia and has yet to qualify for state or federal grants. The impact of the increases, as a public facing agency and member of the City’s emergency response team, will allow our office to conduct:

* Acquisition of 21st century equipment and software technology for both sworn and civilian personnel.
* Hiring functional staff to build efficient, audit capable operations and reporting systems.
* Support the use of the augmentation contract for IT staff, to manage our office, hardware, software and automation processes.
* Installation and management of the inventory management system to maintain the office reporting requirement to the city.
* Obtain services using local business entities via the RFP and contracting process.
* Create a plan for enforcing red flag laws.
* Coordinate planning with other law enforcement partners regarding enforcing the lost and stolen gun ordinance.
* Enhancing our warrant units’ ability to decrease the backlog of felony warrants.
* Developing strategies for enacting safe storage requirements.
* Train our sworn personnel in the latest law enforcement tactics, techniques and procedures.
* Upgrade the skill sets of civilian personnel.
* Translate all sheriff office literature into the **9 languages** that represent the citizenship of Philadelphia.

Contracting experience

[Budget will insert the Excel tables: *M/W/DSBE Participation on Large Professional Services Contracts and Non-Profit Vendor Demographics.*