



State of New York  
**Executive Chamber**  
Albany 12224

**Kathy Hochul**  
GOVERNOR

**Kathryn Garcia**  
DIRECTOR OF STATE OPERATIONS &  
INFRASTRUCTURE

November 4, 2024

Dear members of the Commission on Legislative, Judicial, & Executive Compensation,

My name is Kathryn Garcia, and I am submitting testimony as the New York State Director of State Operations and Infrastructure in favor of a much-needed salary increase for New York State's Commissioners and agency officials. The dedicated individuals leading our state agencies shoulder a tremendous responsibility, managing complex, high-stakes portfolios that directly affect the lives of millions of New Yorkers. Their roles require not only technical expertise and years of experience but also exceptional leadership, resilience, and a deep commitment to public service. If we continue to not compensate them fairly, we risk not only losing the talented individuals that we have, but also risk not being able to attract the best and brightest to these positions- a risk that will ultimately negatively impact the lives of New Yorkers.

New York's Commissioners oversee some of the most intricate and challenging agencies in the nation. From public safety, transportation, health, and social services to environmental protection and housing, each agency's work is essential to the well-being of our state. Commissioners are tasked with efficiently managing vast budgets, ensuring compliance with state and federal laws, implementing forward-thinking policies, and overseeing thousands of employees. They often work round the clock and face intense public and political scrutiny. Yet, their salaries have not kept pace with the private sector or even comparable public sector roles.

As a former New York City Commissioner and current state employee, I understand this problem personally. Those who are dedicated to public service know they are not entering this field to become millionaires; they want to spend every day improving the lives of the constituents they serve. However, they still need to make reasonable choices for their livelihoods and families, which often means we are competing with public sector roles in localities. For example, The City

of New York is a major competitor for top tier public sector managers, with salaries for their agency heads well exceeding both the current and proposed level of Section 169 officials (\$277K for Tier A equivalents). When I was Commissioner for NYC's Department of Sanitation in 2020, serving a city of 8 million people, my salary was significantly higher than what our state agency heads are making today, some of which are responsible for upwards of 20 million people.

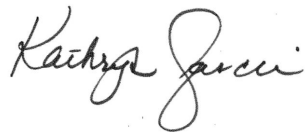
New York State's Commissioners have also been left behind when compared to other state employees. Since 2021, unionized and managerial employees have been receiving yearly salary increases averaging 2.5% a year, while State Commissioner salaries have remained flat. This has caused compression issues, where the salaries of subordinates exceed the salaries of the agency heads. The proposed increases for these officials are roughly equivalent to what their salaries would be had these officials had received the same General Salary Increases (GSIs) paid to most unionized State employees at the beginning of FYs 2022-25.

Moreover, these officials have not received a salary increase since January 1, 2021. If we do not act this year, we will not have another opportunity to increase these officials' salaries through the Commission process until January 1, 2029. I also want to note that an additional 3 percent GSI is scheduled to be paid to managerial and most unionized State employees at the beginning of FY 2026 and additional GSIs will likely be negotiated for the beginning of FYs 27, 28, and 29 before the Commission has an opportunity to increase Commissioner salaries again.

An increase in salary for these roles would enable us to continue attracting and retaining top talent, ensuring that the most capable leaders are at the helm of our critical agencies. The expertise of our Commissioners cannot be overstated—they are the individuals we rely on to manage crises, from hurricanes to pandemics, as well as to implement progressive policy changes that improve quality of life for all New Yorkers. We need to recognize the value and magnitude of their work and compensate them accordingly. This increase is not merely about equity or staying competitive; it's about making sure that New York State has the leadership it needs to navigate our most pressing challenges and to achieve our shared goals for the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to support this proposal to provide fair, competitive compensation to our agency Commissioners. The strength and resilience of New York State's government—and ultimately the well-being of its citizens—depends on it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathryn Garcia". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathryn Garcia  
Director of State Operations & Infrastructure