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DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES & PUBLIC PROTECTION  
**COMMISSIONER RONNELL A. HIGGINS**

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November 22, 2024

Good afternoon,

As I reflect upon my first year as Commissioner, I am gratified by what has been accomplished in so many areas. First and foremost, I extend to you my sincere thanks for the work everyone is doing within the six divisions of our organization.

I know that at times this was a very difficult year. Our brothers and sisters in the Connecticut State Police faced tremendous tragedy, first with K9 Broko's line of duty death, and then when Trooper First Class Aaron Pelletier was hit and killed. The collective sense of deep loss is profound and changes us, but also provides us with the opportunity to deepen our commitments to our work and to one another. In these incredibly hard times, people rallied and supported one another, showing a camaraderie across DESPP.

One year ago, I introduced myself to you and made several commitments. One of these was my driving mantra of "Listen. Learn. Lead." Over this past year, I've had the opportunity to speak with and listen to many of you—and this is something I pledge to continue doing. Along the way, I've been continually reminded of the profound role all of you play.

We are the unique state agency that matters deeply to the everyday life of people in Connecticut - from providing crucial 911 service, to coordinating municipal, state and federal emergency responses, to unprecedented floods and fires, to safeguarding election day voting, to training the firefighters and police officers who are on the frontlines as first responders. And those are just a few examples.

At the state forensic lab, this kind of focus, commitment and teamwork means we are helping to make Connecticut a model for the nation, with creation of a statewide network of kiosks that provide rapid testing of ballistic crime scene evidence. This means more accurate leads and more resolved cases.

I am especially proud of our response to challenges that have emerged, particularly with the use of data to drive our decisions. We have created new policies, improved training, and added technology to ensure that traffic stop data is trustworthy and accurate. Meanwhile, our patrol troopers are responding to the reckless driving crisis by focusing on the most dangerous highways.

As we demonstrate what DESPP represents to Connecticut, we are opening new doors. Our growing intern and outreach programs offer new opportunities for citizen involvement. Scores of residents learned about careers in law enforcement at our first-ever recruitment fair at the POST Academy.

Looking forward to 2025, we will launch several organizational changes to improve our service to the citizens of Connecticut and best utilize our exceptional talent and resources. One mission will be a focus on ensuring that our policies are up to date and reflect modern practices. For example, we're already making significant progress on a comprehensive update to the Administration & Operations Manual.

Over the coming days and months, we will identify new opportunities to better align our essential functions and services and support our work so we can give people the resources to do their jobs more easily. All future changes will be designed to tap best practices that support the agency's success today—and extend well into the future.

Carefully planned and well-executed change can be transformational for an organization and all of you play a vital role with your insights and thoughts. I am deeply appreciative of the feedback I've received over the past year, and I look forward to hearing from more of you as we head into the coming year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronnell A. Higgins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ronnell A. Higgins  
Commissioner