



## **Proposal for a Statewide Coalition of Civilian Oversight Agencies in New York**

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### **Background & Rationale**

Civilian oversight of law enforcement remains an essential mechanism for advancing accountability, transparency, and public trust. In New York State, oversight agencies such as the Rochester Police Accountability Board (PAB), New York City's Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB), Albany's Community Police Review Board (CPRB), and Suffolk County's Human Rights Commission Police Oversight Committee serve diverse communities with varying levels of authority, capacity, and legislative support.

Recent legal and political developments—including the 2024 *Locust Club II* court ruling, which significantly curtailed the investigative powers of Rochester's PAB—underscore the urgent need for stronger collaboration, mutual support, and collective advocacy among oversight bodies. These challenges, coupled with an evolving public safety landscape, demand unified strategies and statewide solidarity.

Momentum from the October 2024 NACOLE Regional Conference—where representatives from Albany, NYC, and Rochester discussed oversight challenges—affirmed the value of coordinated action. This proposal outlines the creation of a Statewide Coalition of Civilian Oversight Agencies to share expertise, standardize training, promote equitable practices, and advocate for legislative change across New York.

### **Goals & Objectives**

- 1. Strengthen Oversight Through Collaboration**
  - Facilitate cross-agency learning through regular meetings and shared experiences.
  - Identify and disseminate proven oversight models and strategies.
- 2. Support Agencies Facing Legal or Political Challenges**
  - Create a rapid-response team to support agencies affected by court rulings or legislative setbacks.
  - Share legal guidance, strategic messaging, and public relations templates.
- 3. Standardize and Expand Civilian Police Academy (CPA) Programming**
  - Develop a shared curriculum that includes public safety education, community-police relations, and civilian oversight responsibilities.
  - Tailor modules to local needs while maintaining statewide learning outcomes.

#### **4. Enhance Public Engagement and Visibility**

- Coordinate town halls, listening sessions, and digital campaigns to elevate civilian voices.
- Develop multilingual outreach tools to ensure inclusivity across diverse communities.

#### **5. Advance Legislative Reform and Advocacy**

- Monitor statewide legislation impacting civilian oversight and respond with a united voice.
- Coordinate campaigns to secure or protect oversight powers through policy change.

#### **6. Address Emerging Trends in Public Safety**

- Track patterns in police conduct, civilian complaints, and public sentiment.
- Use comparative data to identify reform opportunities and craft evidence-based recommendations.

#### **7. Sustain NACOLE and Regional Momentum**

- Transform episodic conference conversations into ongoing partnerships and working groups.

#### **8. Leverage Technology to Stay Connected**

- Create a central hub (Slack, Teams, or shared drive) for document exchange and communication.
- Launch a quarterly newsletter or briefing to update members on developments, successes, and needs.

#### **9. Promote Professional Development and Talent Retention**

- Offer shared training, mentorship programs, and career development opportunities for oversight professionals.
- Establish a statewide talent pipeline for oversight agency staffing.

#### **10. Advance Data Collection, Analysis, and Transparency**

- Standardize metrics and definitions for case tracking and reporting.
- Create shared dashboards and reporting templates to help agencies compare outcomes and practices.

### **Proposed Structure & Logistics**

To operationalize the Coalition, we recommend:

#### **1. Initial Virtual Convening**

- To gather interested agencies, share foundational values, and co-create priorities.

#### **2. Mission and Vision Statement Creation**

- Develop shared language around purpose, impact, and commitment to equity and justice.

#### **3. Annual Oversight Summit**

- Rotate host cities (NYC, Albany, Rochester, etc.) and include training, panel discussions, and strategy sessions.

#### **4. Quarterly Strategy Sessions (Virtual)**

- Address timely topics such as protest response, mental health interventions, use-of-force reviews, and board governance.

#### **5. Standing Working Groups**

- Focused on areas such as:
  - Legal and legislative affairs
  - Public education and community engagement
  - Data collection and analysis
  - CPA curriculum and training

#### **6. Technology and Communications**

- Launch an intranet or shared workspace for communication.
- Design a logo, branding kit, and public-facing website or landing page to increase visibility and credibility.

### **Next Steps**

#### **1. Confirm Interest and Identify Regional Liaisons**

- Each agency designates a representative to co-lead the planning phase.

#### **2. Host Founding Meeting (Summer 2025)**

- Share draft charter or memorandum of understanding (MOU) and vote on coalition structure.

#### **3. Draft and Finalize MOU**

- Define participation expectations, leadership roles, meeting cadence, and guiding principles.

#### **4. Schedule First Annual Oversight Summit (Spring 2026)**

- Focus: "Resilient Oversight in an Era of Challenge and Change"

#### **5. Pursue Grant Funding and Institutional Support**

- Identify aligned funders (e.g., NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services, DOJ COPS Office, private foundations).
- Consider pooled applications for shared technology or training initiatives.

### **Call to Action**

By coming together in shared purpose, New York's civilian oversight bodies can ensure sustainability, amplify local impact, and advocate with collective strength. In the face of growing complexity, collaboration is not just strategic—it is essential.

For more information or to express interest in joining the Coalition, please contact:

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