



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeremy Cooney

Senator Cooney Announces One Million Dollars for New Teen Center in Rochester

JEREMY COONEY September 25, 2023

| ISSUE: [NYS SENATOR COONEY](#), [NYS GRANT FUNDING](#), [INVESTING IN OUR YOUTH](#)



Senator Cooney Poses with Teen Empowerment Leadership and Staff

(ROCHESTER, NY) - Today, **New York State Senator Jeremy Cooney**, announced one million dollars in state funding for construction of Teen Empowerment's new teen center in SW Rochester.

Teen Empowerment's mission focuses on raising the voices of youth to influence change in their own community. The program employs local teens as Youth Organizers, allowing them to work to identify pressing issues and develop strategic responses within their community. Mobilization initiatives engage a large number of youth and adults in Rochester.

The non-profit, youth-serving organization has outgrown their current location on Genesee Street. The 300 square foot community room inside the rented space is often filled to capacity, for events allowing local teens to openly share their experiences and perspectives.

The new center, named the *Barack and Michelle Obama Youth Center*, will be constructed across the street and allow the organization to employ more young people, increase the number and size of events for the greater community, and provide a space for youth across Rochester to unite and influence the policies and practices that affect them and their communities. Designs include a large community room, study areas, and a multimedia recording studio.

Senator Cooney has awarded the funding through a member allocation included in the New York State budget. The Senator's office is hopeful this show of support from New York State will inspire other community members to contribute to the project so construction can begin soon. Teen Empowerment continues to solicit donations and raise funds for the remaining expenses associated with construction and furnishing of the new teen center.

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*Young people play a pivotal role in moving our city forward today, and leading our progress toward a better tomorrow," said **Senator Cooney**. "Teen Empowerment's new youth center not only demonstrates our commitment to the next generation, it sends a message that decades-long disinvestment in city neighborhoods is over. I am proud to secure \$1 million in funding for this critical build, and urge leaders in our community as well as government partners to rally in support of this needed safe space for our youth."*

“Our youth deserve this, our community deserves this and it is time to put revitalization efforts in neighborhoods that have experienced dilapidation and divestment for too long,” said **Doug Ackely**, *Rochester Executive Director, Teen Empowerment*. “Senator Cooney understands the need for equity and is willing to go to bat for the resources that lift up these types of projects. We are deeply grateful to him and New York State for this investment in TE's future.”

“The Barack and Michelle Obama Youth Center will be a monument unlike any this neighborhood has ever seen,” said **Kaden Hall**, *Teen Empowerment Community Organizer Alumni*. “While its people are where all the real magic happens, this beautiful new building will attract youth not yet connected to the organization, and amplify our group's message throughout Rochester.”

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