



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

## Senator Murphy Secures State Funding to Help John Jay Students Stay "Above the Influence"

TERRENCE MURPHY February 9, 2018

| ISSUE: **ABOVE THE INFLUENCE, ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE, TEENAGERS, HIGH SCHOOL**



South Salem, NY - It is a time-tested fact that teenagers listen more to their friends than they do to their parents or teachers. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, by the time they are seniors, almost 70 percent of high school students will have tried alcohol, half will have taken an illegal drug, and more than 20 percent will have experimented with prescription drugs.

These sobering statistics can be filtered through a common origin - peer pressure. Too many

teens cannot say no to their friends or to the prestige of being perceived as the cool kid at school. Coming from a large family of siblings and with three school-aged children, including one already navigating through her teens, Senator Terrence Murphy helped to secure funding for "Above the Influence (ATI)", a drug prevention and education program aimed at teens.

ATI is a substance abuse prevention program that engages student leaders in encouraging their peers to make healthy choices. Funded by a \$1.5 million grant appropriated by Senator Rob Ortt, Chair of the Senate Committee on Mental Health, ATI is being implemented at sixty high schools and middle schools across New York State--including John Jay Middle School in South Salem.

"Thousands of New Yorkers, including teens, are dying due to the disease of addiction," said Senator Murphy. "When it comes to ruining lives, drugs and alcohol are equal opportunity threats that can destroy a teen's future. I am proud to have provided funding to the Katonah-Lewisboro School District to help support 'Above the influence,' a program which will provide help students make an informed decision to say no."

Andrew Selesnick, Superintendent of the Katonah-Lewisboro School District, stated, "We are very pleased to introduce another leadership opportunity for our students. Above the Influence helps harness the idea of positive peer influence, and in this day and age, I think that's an especially important skill for our students to practice and master."

ATI encourages teens to be above negative influences, develop positive life aspirations and achieve personal goals. ATI was initially developed by the Partnership for Drug Free Kids to help reduce teen substance abuse. In 2013, the University of Rochester adapted ATI as a middle class prevention program led by carefully trained 8th grade "Peer Leaders" with

ongoing adult mentoring. An evaluation of ATI in four middle schools in New York found that Peer Leaders reduced their fellow student's intentions to use substances, particularly among close friends.