



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Griffo: Legislation will provide greater privacy protections to witnesses and first responders

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO January 31, 2020

| ISSUE: **DISCOVERY REFORM, FIRST RESPONDERS**



UTICA – New York State Senate Deputy Minority Leader Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, today highlighted legislation he has introduced and supports that provides greater privacy protections for witnesses of crimes and their families, as well as firefighters, EMS workers and other first responders.

The hastily enacted criminal justice reforms of 2019 have jeopardized the safety of New York's communities. One of the more disconcerting policies enacted as part of these sweeping changes is the disclosure of personal information related to a witness to a crime to the defense and the accused. Such a policy has the potential to lead to witness intimidation via the accused or their associates.

To address this issue, Deputy Minority Leader Griffo introduced Senate Bill S7133. The legislation, which is in the Senate's Codes Committee, provides for a witness to state to law enforcement that they are either comfortable with the release of their personal information or whether they are concerned that such disclosure would jeopardize their safety or the safety of those around them. A justification must be provided to law enforcement and is subject to review by a judge.

Deputy Minority Leader Griffo also highlighted The Emergency First Responders Privacy and Protection Act (S7280), which he is supporting in the Senate.

While current law protects law enforcement personnel from disclosure of name and adequate contact information in this process to protect them and their families from threats, the same protection is not extended to first responders, who are in many instances called upon to provide services at crime scenes. The bill would extend the same protections offered to law enforcement to other first responders so that they are not subject to retaliation or witness tampering.

This legislation also has been referred to the Senate's Codes Committee.

"It is appalling that witnesses of crimes, first responders and their families could become targets as a result of changes made to the discovery process supported by the Democratic majorities in the Legislature," Deputy Minority Leader Griffo said. "These bills will help to

ensure that the names and contact information of witnesses and emergency personnel are protected and that they and their loved ones are not susceptible to retaliatory actions by those accused of committing crimes or their associates.”

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