



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

Senator Michelle Hinchey Brings Senate Mental Health Committee Chair Samra Brouk to Ulster County, Highlights Need for Greater Investment in Services for Upstate Communities

MICHELLE HINCHEY October 25, 2021



KINGSTON, NY – Last week, Senator Michelle Hinchey (D-46) welcomed the Chair of the Senate Committee on Mental Health, Senator Samra G. Brouk (D-55), to Ulster County to meet with local leaders in health and government. Discussions centered on the need for greater investment in mental health and substance use disorder services in upstate New York and opportunities for legislative solutions that the State Senate can prioritize in the 2022 session.

“Every New Yorker has been impacted by the mental health and substance use crisis, but for upstate residents, accessing treatment and recovery services can be extremely difficult due to decades of underinvestment in our health care system,” **said Senator Michelle Hinchey.** “It was a privilege to welcome the Chair of the Senate

Committee on Mental Health, Samra Brouk, to Ulster County to see both the challenges we face and the proven models of success that are helping community members every day. The mental health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are devastatingly widespread and have left detrimental impacts on families and communities. I look forward to working with Senator Brouk and my legislative colleagues to help expand life-saving local services so that upstate residents can access the health care they need and deserve.”

Senate Mental Health Committee Chair Samra Brouk said, “I thank Senator Hinchey for welcoming me to her district to gain a firsthand understanding of the mental health and substance abuse challenges faced by the 46th District, and how innovative approaches have been able to provide services in remote communities. The pandemic has resulted in a greater need for mental health services across the state, and it is essential that we ensure that everyone, including people living in rural communities, has access to quality mental health care.”

The Senators began the day at Hinchey’s district office in Kingston for a meeting with local nurses and labor representatives Janet Strominger and Minerva Solla from the New York Nurses Association (NYSNA). The group discussed the urgent need to return the hospital-based mental health and detox rehabilitation services previously available in Kingston, which included a 40-bed mental health unit and a 20-bed detox and rehab unit. These services were temporarily transferred from HealthAlliance Hospital Mary’s Avenue Campus in Kingston to Mid-Hudson Regional Hospital (MHRH) in Poughkeepsie as part of the emergency need to increase hospital capacity due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hinchey has been a leading voice in the fight to bring these vital mental health and substance use resources back to Kingston, where 40% of Ulster County’s overdose deaths occur.

Hinchey and Brouk continued the day touring two successful Hudson Valley-based models of crisis care. The first stop: Ulster County 911 Emergency Center in Kingston to meet with the County’s Mobile Mental Health Team, which deploys licensed social workers to deliver trauma-informed emergency response support for local residents in crisis. The Senators were joined by Ulster County Executive Pat Ryan, Ulster County Deputy Commissioner of Mental Health Tara McDonald, and Ulster County Director of Emergency Services Everett Erichsen.

Hinchey and Brouk then traveled to the Dutchess County Crisis Stabilization Center in Poughkeepsie — the only state-run crisis stabilization center in New York — for a facility tour accompanied by Senators Pete Harckham (D-40) and Sue Serino (R-41). The walk-in facility is designed to prevent and/or de-escalate a behavioral health crisis associated with a substance use or mental health disorder by matching individuals with the services they need, regardless of their ability to pay.

In the 2021 session, Senator Hinchey and her colleagues secured \$1 million for Crisis Intervention Teams, \$1 million to create a suicide prevention program for high-risk individuals, and \$51 million for the cost of living adjustments (COLAs) for human services workers. The 2021-2022 State Budget also directs the Office of Mental Health and the Office of Addiction Services and Supports to explore alternative crisis response approaches, including crisis stabilization centers and mobile crisis units. Looking ahead to the 2022 legislative session, Senator Hinchey is committed to bolstering support for mental health and substance use disorder services in upstate and rural New York.

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