



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Skoufis

## Skoufis, Local Officials Announce Funding for New Law Enforcement Caseworker Position in Orange County

JAMES SKOUFIS July 27, 2022

| ISSUE: **PUBLIC SAFETY, STATE FUNDING, ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, COMMUNITY POLICING**



Senator James Skoufis (D-Hudson Valley) joined Middletown Mayor Joe Destefano, Bureau Commander of Operations/Lieutenant Jeffry R. Thoelen, and local police officers to announce new funding for a novel ‘community caseworker’ position—a model for addressing high call volume related to mental illness, homelessness, and domestic violence to help keep both law enforcement professionals and local constituents safe.

The state funding, a combination of Legal Services Assistance Fund and Department of Criminal Justice Services grants, will create a first-ever, full-time community casework position within the City of Middletown Police Department. This caseworker will help connect neighbors facing hardship with appropriate services to improve their living situations and limit future interactions with law enforcement.

## q

*“When we say public safety is an all-hands-on-deck issue, local leaders mean that all hands need to be engaged – including social service providers who have the know-how to support those in immediate distress,” said **Senator Skoufis**. “I applaud the Middletown PD for their out-of-the-box thinking on solving the issues within their community. This is truly a model for municipalities throughout Orange County and I welcome inquiries from other departments interested in implementing this novel approach to safety.”*

“I want to thank Senator Skoufis for his quick action,” said **Middletown Mayor Joe Destefano**. “Middletown has a special-needs population as with any urban setting – with 30,000 residents in 5 square miles – and deserves improved public safety. The early support from Senator Skoufis is commendable.”

“This program was the brainchild of Chief Ewanciw after speaking with many in our community who had needs but didn’t know how to have them met,” said **Bureau Commander, Lt. Jeff Thoelen**. “As cops, we deal with so many people with different needs. Police officers are expected to be problem solvers, doctors, lawyers, therapists, auto mechanics, teachers – a sort of superhero to save the day. But we can’t do it alone. This new funding is critical to helping us meet our community’s needs.”

Thoelen also added that the police department is actively hiring. To learn more about the department, visit [www.middletownpolice.com](http://www.middletownpolice.com).