



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeremy Cooney

To Combat Human Trafficking, Senator Cooney, Goodwill Of The Finger Lakes, Launch Funding Push To Expand Services At 211 Hotline

JEREMY COONEY April 3, 2025

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Only Current Option For Witnesses Of Human Trafficking Is To Call A Toll Free Number

Funding Would Train Local 211 Operators To Assist With Trafficking Calls

(ROCHESTER, NY) - Today, **Senator Jeremy Cooney (D-Rochester)**, Goodwill of the Finger Lakes, and anti-human trafficking advocates announced their push for \$150,000 in this year's

FY26 NYS budget to train 211 LIFE LINE call operators on how to respond and process incoming calls relating to human trafficking tips.

Currently, anyone looking to submit a tip, be connected to resources, or learn safety advice can call a toll free number provided by the National Human Trafficking Hotline. This funding would train 211 LIFE LINE call operators to become equipped to respond to these tips themselves, an easier number to remember and dial for potential witnesses of human trafficking. Funding would also advertise the availability of the 211 LIFE LINE and launch a public awareness campaign to educate residents on recognizing the signs of human trafficking.

“When someone sees something suspicious, they don’t have time to wait,” said **Senator Jeremy Cooney**. “211 is already relied upon by so many in our community for everything from food assistance to mental health resources. This funding would prepare the talented 211 operators to be able to respond to human trafficking tips, an easy-to-remember three digit number that could go a long way towards keeping our community members safe.”

“People who are being trafficked often face immense challenges, and it’s critical for them to have access to resources that can help them escape and recover from their situation,” said **Jennifer Lake, President & CEO of Goodwill of the Finger Lakes (GFL)**. “211/LIFE LINE, which is administered by GFL for Monroe, Wayne, Ontario, Livingston, Cayuga and Seneca counties, provides a safe and confidential way for people who are either witnessing or experiencing trafficking to report, as the call log number is easy to understand and if needed, explain. This funding will make it easier to provide immediate help, guidance, and access to resources in a safe, dignified manner.”

“The public can play an essential role in supporting our work as troopers of rooting out the scourge of human trafficking, but only if they have trusted outlets to turn to if they or

people they know are being victimized," **New York State Troopers PBA President Charles W. Murphy** said. "211 can be a critical resource for victims and witnesses to use to seek help. That's why we stand with Senator Cooney in advocating for additional state funding to ensure operators have the training they need to be as effective as possible in fielding these calls. Together, we will work to end human trafficking in New York – one call at a time."

Shannon Struzik, Vice President at Leonard's Express and a representative from the Trucking Association of New York said, "Truck drivers often spot signs of human trafficking at truck stops, rest areas, and high-traffic routes. They can identify red flags, such as individuals who seem out of place, fearful, or under duress. At Leonard's Express, we've incorporated Truckers Against Trafficking training into our onboarding process to position our drivers to make a real difference in our community. A trained 211 operator network ensures that drivers have a trusted resource to report potential trafficking, enhancing our ability to intervene and protect victims."

"Sex and labor trafficking are grave human rights violations affecting people of all ages, genders, and backgrounds," said **Senator Roxanne J. Persaud, Chair of the Senate Social Services Committee**. "I applaud Senator Cooney for his advocacy this issue and for working with 2-1-1 to get advanced training for call center personnel. I look forward to continuing our collaboration and passing my legislation to get all state transportation regulators on the Interagency Task Force on Human Trafficking."

In 2023, The National Human Trafficking Hotline received 1,212 calls and texts from New York. 400 of those were determined to be directly from victims and survivors of human trafficking themselves. Senator Cooney explained that with this funding, 211 LIFE LINE could be the first stop for anyone looking for resources or support.

The International Labor Organization estimates that 27.6 million people were trapped in forced labor and forced sexual exploitation daily in 2021, highlighting trafficking as one of the fastest-growing and most pervasive criminal enterprises. In New York, 2,103 youth were identified as trafficked or at risk, according to 2022 data from New York's Safe Harbour Program. Notably, over 61% of these referrals involved youth aged 15 and younger.

211 LIFE LINE is available by phone, text, or online chat and is administered by Goodwill of the Finger Lakes.

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