



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Tim Kennedy and Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes Secure \$300,000 to Provide Alternative Workforce and Educational Opportunities for At-Risk Youth Through the Service Collaborative of WNY's YouthBuild Program

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BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy (D-Buffalo) and Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes (D-Buffalo) joined the Service Collaborative of WNY’s Executive Director Kate Sarata and her staff at their headquarters in Buffalo Monday to announce \$300,000 in state funding for an intensive, individualized program aimed at engaging at-risk youth and preparing them with essential life and job skills needed to build long-term careers. This funding will allow the Service Collaborative to collaborate with WNY organizations, including PUSH Buffalo, The Foundry, Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Maryvale Community Education, and Community Services for Every1 (CSE1) to identify 40 OCFS-eligible youth to participate in WNY YouthBuild (WNYBYB). The funding was part of a greater \$5.5 million investment by New York State to 14 programs statewide, which provide vulnerable youth with alternatives to gang involvement or other negative activities that may exist in their communities.

“Engaging Western New York’s at-risk youth through alternative programming is key to ensuring we’re providing long-term opportunities for all youth - regardless of the path they are currently on or the circumstances that have led them to where they are today,” said **Senator Tim Kennedy**. “This state money will help shape lives and re-engage students who often feel lost and left out of a one-size-fits-all system. Through WNY YouthBuild, the Service Collaborative of WNY will be able to provide a critical support structure and leadership development for those who need it most, and equip disadvantaged youth with not only the educational tools needed to succeed, but on-the-job training in industries like information and technology,

healthcare, maintenance, and building trades.”

“The \$300,000 in state funding will help at-risk young men and women to learn the life and job skills they need to be successful in their chosen career paths,” said **Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes**. “The Service Collaborative of WNY’s Youth Build Program continues to provide an important service in giving these youth the training and support they need to be successful in life.”

“The Service Collaborative recognized the need for additional workforce and education experiences for young people in WNY,” said **Kate Sarata, Executive Director of The Service Collaborative of WNY**. “This funding will allow us to engage more youth, providing them with a holistic experience to succeed.”

“I believe in the youth of WNY and their ability to effect lasting positive change in our community,” said **Bryan Lawrence, Senior Director of Youth Development and Volunteerism Operations at The Service Collaborative of WNY**. “We are thrilled to be able to provide a support system and transformational experience so they may gain the necessary skills to reach their full potential and find a pathway to success.”

The New York State programs awarded funding will target youth aged 16-24 who face unemployment, are entangled in the justice system, have dropped out of school, are aging out of foster care, are involved or at risk of becoming involved in gang-related activities, and more.

Upon enrollment into WNY YouthBuild, participants will go through a detailed assessment to determine academic levels, work readiness skill levels, career interests, and supportive services needed. Based on the outcome of these reviews, youth will then be placed on a team that best suits their service strategy, and assigned a case manager, who will serve as a point of contact and work alongside them throughout the program. Case managers will also help participants develop and implement a multi-faceted service strategy that includes educational, employment, and personal goals and career pathways.

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