



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Skoufis

Skoufis Launches Two Youth Initiatives

JAMES SKOUFIS April 18, 2022

| ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; MENTAL HEALTH, ADDICTION & OVERDOSE PREVENTION, EMPOWERING STUDENTS AND PARENTS**



Senator James Skoufis (D-Hudson Valley) held his first-ever virtual youth town hall on Wednesday, April 6, aimed at creating space for young people from his district to voice their hopes, questions, and concerns. Skoufis also announced the newest members of his Youth Advisory Council (YAC), a volunteer-based advocacy body composed of civically-minded middle school, high school, and college students.

Town hall participants spoke about the struggles of immuno-compromised family members, the need for veterans' mental health support, and the scourge of recent student drug overdoses in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic. Skoufis highlighted several initiatives, including a new partnership between the NYS Office of Mental Health and the Department of Education to direct mental health funding to schools and lawmakers' plan to create a cabinet-level Department of Veterans' Affairs.

"As one of a handful of State Senators under 40, it's crucial that I continue to advocate for the priorities and goals of the young people in my district, and to ensure the state is doing everything in its power to support and retain these residents," said **Senator Skoufis**. "I am grateful to those who spoke during Wednesday's youth town hall event and I look forward to productive conversations with our Youth Advisory Council in the weeks ahead. I encourage all area youth to see my office as a resource, and to advocate for themselves and their classmates; lawmakers need to hear you to better represent you in Albany."

Youth Advisory Council members will participate in numerous conversations with Senator Skoufis, local and state officials, and other members of state government, learning about legislative and political processes and local issues, and voicing their opinions about how best to support and represent their constituency. The Council's first meeting was held on April 12, organized by Skoufis' **Community Engagement Specialist Yasmine Bouachri**, a recent graduate and former Skoufis intern.

Youth Advisory Council members include: Nick Alappat, Mairead Andren, Julia Bryant, Anna Dovgan, Sofia Forestieri, Liam Gaffney, Ekamjot Gill, Lucas Haley, Paxton Honerkamp, Ellie Hoppe, Hailey Lanari, Grant Lemler, Anne Mangatt, Michael Martinez, Allaha Mohiby, Damian Pascal Jr., Hunter Petro, Izabellah Reynoso, Jenell Rosales, Jenna Rowen-Delson, Diya Sethi, Jeffery Shi, Alexa Sparta, Isaiah Tejada, Fiorella Vega, and Audrey Whitfield.

Members represent Monroe-Woodbury, Heritage M.S., James I. O'Neill H.S., Warwick H.S., Pine Bush H.S., Valley Central H.S., North Rockland H.S., Newburgh Free Academy, and some private institutions.

When first elected to the Assembly at 25, Skoufis served as the then-youngest member. Now in his capacity as a State Senator, he works diligently to center the needs and perspectives of young people in state policy.

###