



— NEW YORK STATE SENATOR —
Jeremy Cooney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 31, 2022

Contact: Miles Cuning, Communications Associate, cuning@nysenate.gov, 585-362-1532

**NYS SENATOR JEREMY COONEY ANNOUNCES PUBLIC SAFETY BILL
DESIGNED TO BOLSTER PROTECTIONS FOR WITNESSES IN HOMICIDE CASES**

(ROCHESTER, NY) - Today, **Senator Jeremy Cooney (D-Rochester)** announced [new public safety legislation](#) that will provide additional protections for witnesses of homicide.

Homicide clearance rates are declining across the state as communities, including Rochester, face this increased violence. Historically, the homicide clearance rate for municipalities across the state is over 90 percent—now, it has fallen to, at best, around 70%, and, at worst, to half. In Rochester, the number of shooting victims in 2021 was up over 105% from the 2016-2020 five-year average, and the homicide clearance rate in the city was just 53.3%.

One factor in such a low homicide clearance rate is the hesitancy of witnesses to come forward for fear of retaliation if their identities are disclosed to the perpetrator. This bill adds homicide crimes to the list of offenses for which the prosecution can withhold the disclosure of any 911 caller, victim, or witness. The defense still has a legal right to move the court for disclosure, if warranted.

By providing this additional layer of witness protection, police departments across the state will likely see more cooperation with citizens in order to bring justice and closure to the families of victims of homicides.

Senator Jeremy Cooney:

“Rochester needs bold leadership—at all levels of government—to address the alarmingly high homicide rate our city is facing. My legislation is a first step toward empowering neighbors and law enforcement to work together to solve these deadly crimes and bring justice to the families who grieve.

Families will never completely heal from their loss, but this legislation can help bring much needed closure for the victim’s loved ones. No law can bring back a parent, sibling, or friend, but we must pass data-informed and common-sense bills that create safer communities, and help to ease the pain so many are feeling in our city and across New York State. I am committed to doing that work.”

###

S8168 can be read in full here: <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/s8168>