

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) last week secured the House Appropriations Committee's approval of \$175,000 for the Center for Court Innovation's Mid-Hudson Valley Drug Court Enhancement project in Kingston, Middletown, Newburgh and Poughkeepsie. Hinchey, who is a member of the House Appropriations Committee, worked to secure the funds for the drug courts as part of the Fiscal Year 2009 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill. The measure still has several legislative steps to go, but having the funds included in the original version of the bill is considered a critical step in the process. The funds may also face a challenge from President Bush who has said he opposes the inclusion of funding for such projects.

"These funds are essential in helping drug courts break the cycle of substance abuse and crime." Hinchey said. "These courts are struggling to enroll and keep participants involved in treatment programs, and this funding will provide them with additional resources to meet their mission here in the Hudson Valley."

The Mid-Hudson Valley Drug Court Enhancement Project will use the funds to hire a youth and family coordinator who will work to increase the courts' ability to engage young people, including those who have criminal records. This coordinator will also work to provide outreach to schools, treatment providers and community groups. In addition, these funds will create a Youth Advisory Board which will suggest new and innovative ways of enhancing the delivery of services to young drug court participants, their families and the community.

Drug courts are specialized courts that are designed to handle cases involving non-violent criminals who have substance abuse and addiction problems. They combine the efforts of justice and treatment professionals and actively intervene to break the cycle of substance abuse and crime.