



## OFFICE OF THE MERCER COUNTY PROSECUTOR

**ANGELO J. ONOFRI**  
*Prosecutor*

**TRACEY McKEOWN**  
*Chief of County Detectives*

209 S. Broad Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
P.O. Box 8068  
Trenton, New Jersey 08650-0068  
Phone: (609) 989-6350  
mercercountyprosecutor.com

**STEPHANIE A. KATZ**  
*First Assistant Prosecutor*

**MICHAEL J. NOVEMBRE**  
*Deputy Chief of County Detectives*

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**CONTACT:** Casey A. DeBlasio  
(609) 989-6379

### **Mercer County Announces Appointment of Michael Pellegrino as Law Enforcement Resiliency Program Officer**

Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo J. Onofri and Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes announced today the appointment of Agent Michael Pellegrino as the county's resiliency program officer.

In August, Attorney General Gurbir Grewal issued a law enforcement directive implementing the New Jersey Resiliency Program for Law Enforcement (NJRP-LE). Known as the "Officer Resiliency Directive," the statewide program to train officers in resiliency and to become better equipped to handle the daily stress of police work that, when left unchecked, may lead to physical ailments, depression and burnout.

New Jersey is the first state in the country to require that all state, county and municipal law enforcement agencies designate a resiliency program officer (RPO) who will be specially trained in – and ultimately train their departments in – resiliency. Pellegrino will be responsible for training all of the law enforcement officers / RPOs in Mercer County, including the prosecutor's office, county corrections and park rangers.

"We are grateful to Attorney General Grewal for recognizing the need to provide law enforcement officers with the training, tools and resources to promote resiliency and combat the emotional and mental health challenges they face every day while protecting the public," Prosecutor Onofri said. "I would also like to thank Mercer County Executive Hughes for allowing my office to add the chief resiliency officer position. Agent Pellegrino brings a wealth of experience and expertise to this highly specialized area and we are lucky to have him."

“Members of our law enforcement and first responder communities experience frequent stress on the job, and we are sensitive to the cumulative effect of those stressors on their well-being,” County Executive Hughes said. “I thank Attorney General Grewal for advancing this significant directive so that Mercer County has the tools to give law enforcement the support they deserve, and I ensure my full support to the Office of the Prosecutor”

In August, Pellegrino retired as a detective from the Ewing Police Department after 25 years of service. In addition to working in the Patrol and Detective bureaus, he spent five years as a school resource officer. During his time with the Community Services Unit, Pellegrino was heavily involved in the department’s Youth Academy, Safety Town, GREAT program and National Night Out.

For four years, Pellegrino was the chairperson of the Peer Liaison Committee for the New Jersey State Policemen’s Benevolent Association. It was during this time he was able to build relationships and develop resources across the state and country that he anticipates utilizing in his new position with the county. Pellegrino credits the state PBA with being at the forefront of the resiliency issue. “The NJSPBA knew there was a stigma attached to ‘tough guys’ talking about feelings and emotions, and they realized changes had to be made to give officers all of the tools necessary to perform such difficult, stressful jobs,” he said.

“I am grateful to Prosecutor Onofri and County Executive Hughes for this opportunity,” Pellegrino continued. “I look forward to helping those in law enforcement see not only their own self-worth, but what they mean to their families and communities.”

The directive requires every law enforcement officer in the state to be trained by the end of 2022. The training consists of a mix of lectures and practical exercises over two days.

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Pictured from left to right are Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes, Resiliency Program Officer Michael Pellegrino and Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo J. Onofri.