

## 2024 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing - Human Services

Thank you, Senate, and Assemblymembers for allowing me to sit here and represent our military community. I have the great privilege of sitting here as the facilitator for the NY State Dwyer Coalition which houses PFC. Joseph P Dwyer Peer Support Projects across the state. In addition, I have the honor of facilitating the Ulster County Dwyer Program aka Vet2Vet of Ulster County which is under the Hudson Valley National Center for Veteran Reintegration.

We can look back and see that 2022 was a tremendous year for the PFC Joseph P Dwyer Peer Projects. The expansion has allowed every Veteran and their family to be connected to resources and services across the state. The Dwyer Projects has allowed service members to feel equally represented because time, discharge status, and length of service do not matter when you connect to a Dwyer Project. If you're homeless, some Dwyer Projects can help pay for a day or two at a hotel. If a Veteran enjoys hiking, a Dwyer Project can assist with getting an individual outdoors. Equine Encounters, Mindfulness, and groups help continue the camaraderie that we experience in service. These attributes represent the Dwyer Counties and that is what was brought to every county in NY State.

The NY State Dwyer Coalition remains mission-focused to keep the camaraderie among the Dwyer Programs. This involves having a single unified platform that creates an ongoing dialogue that addresses the military community's needs and their families. Some needs include increased funding. Increased funds would empower the Dwyer Project to intensify its engagement with Veterans and their families.

The importance of increasing funds to the Dwyer Project becomes evident in the multifaceted impact it has on the veteran community. Enhanced financial support translates into more resources for local programs, enabling them to expand their reach and depth of services. These funds are the lifeblood that sustains monthly meetings, ensuring that the project remains a dynamic force for positive change.

Moreover, additional funds enable the Dwyer Project to innovate and implement new strategies in veteran support. Whether through the introduction of specialized programs, outreach initiatives, or enhanced training for peer support volunteers, increased financial support provides the flexibility needed to adapt to emerging challenges and pioneer effective solutions.

In conclusion, the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Project stands as a testament to the impact that collaborative efforts and advocacy can have on the lives of Veterans. The importance of increasing funds for this project cannot be overstated. It is an investment in the well-being of those who have sacrificed for our country, a commitment to creating a supportive community that understands the complexities of military service.

With enhanced financial support, the Dwyer Project can continue to be a powerful force for positive change. It ensures that group meetings remain vibrant, that engagements with Veterans and their families, and that the network of peer support programs thrives. The funds are not just numbers on a balance sheet; they represent a tangible commitment to the mental health and

resilience of New York's Veterans, fostering a community where the echoes of support reach every corner of the state.

Thank you for your time.

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