



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

## Senator Fuschillo: State Budget Funds Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Program to Help Veterans

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. April 2, 2012

| ISSUE: **VETERANS**

### **Expansion of Veterans' Healthcare Training Initiative will Help Better Train Healthcare Professionals to Meet the Needs of Combat Veterans**

Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R-Merrick) announced that the recently approved state budget contains new funding to help provide improved care for veterans affected by post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health conditions. Almost one in three returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are affected by these illnesses.

The recently approved \$500,000 in state funding will support additional training programs through the Veterans' Mental Health Training Initiative. The initiative, which trained community mental healthcare providers to better treat veteran-specific mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and other conditions, will be expanded to now include primary care healthcare professionals. Senator Fuschillo fought for the initiative's creation in 2008 as part of the state budget and strongly advocated for the new funding to expand the program.

"Our veterans fought for us on the battlefield; we need to make sure we protect them when they return home. Training healthcare professionals about the specific mental health challenges facing veterans will ensure that these heroes can get the care they need and

deserve. I'm pleased the state budget includes funding for this important program," said Senator Fuschillo.

The Veterans' Mental Health Training Initiative is organized by the National Association of Social Workers-New York Chapter (NASW-NYS), the Medical Society of the State of New York (MSSNY), and the New York State Psychiatric Association (NYSPA).

To date, the initiative has helped train hundreds of healthcare providers about veteran-specific issues, ensuring that they are better equipped to care for, and meet the needs of, the returning combat veterans. The program has been overwhelmingly embraced by healthcare professionals, with 93 percent of program participants rating the training sessions as an excellent source of veterans' specific information. Additional feedback also identified the need to expand the initiative to include primary healthcare providers, such as internal medicine, family medicine, women's health, resident physicians, and nurse practitioners, who are often the first ones to provide treatment to returning veterans.

"The Veterans' Mental Health Training Initiative provides clinically advanced evidence-based content on issues specific to meeting the mental health needs of veterans and their families to mental health professionals across the state," stated Reinaldo Cardona, Executive Director of NASW-NYS. "We appreciate Senator Fuschillo's continued commitment to supporting the delivery of quality mental health care to our returning veterans and look forward to partnering again with MSSNY and NYSPA to expand the program to include primary care providers in the coming year."

"We need to make sure every returning veteran gets the care they need. Veterans experience things in a combat zone that are hard for others who have not served to truly understand. Educating professionals to understand veteran specific issues will better prepare them to treat and serve veterans in need," said Robert Tom Riordan, Past

Commander of the Nassau County American Legion.