



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

SERINO ANNOUNCES DWYER FUNDING RESTORED IN STATE BUDGET

SUSAN SERINO March 31, 2019

| ISSUE: **JOSEPH DWYER PEER-TO-PEER VETERANS' SUPPORT PROGRAM**

ALBANY, NY—Senator Sue Serino, who helped lead the legislative push to restore the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer-to-Peer Support Program (Vet2Vet) funding in the State Budget announced that the funding necessary to restore and expand the program has been included in the State Budget which passed the Senate today.

“I have been fighting for Vet2Vet funding since I first took office, and I am so proud to see that thanks to the tireless work of so many advocates and veterans, it has survived the turnover in Albany and will continue for yet another year,” said Senator Serino. “While I could not support this year’s budget in its entirety thanks to the overabundance of new taxes it levies on hard-working New Yorkers, some issues truly transcend politics and this is absolutely one. Vet2Vet saves lives, and I thank Senator John Brooks for truly hearing the concerns of veterans from our community, and across the state, and working with us to ensure that veterans can continue to be served by this critically important program.”

As has been noted throughout the budget process, the Dwyer Program—named for an Iraq War Veteran who lost his life as a result of his struggle with PTSD— was initially launched in only four counties throughout the state in 2012. It uses a unique and confidential peer-to-peer counseling model to empower veterans and their families and to create a local network of support for our servicemen and women. Since its inception, the program has proven to be so successful that it has been expanded to 23 counties.

When Senator Serino first took office in 2015, she was made aware of the program after launching a local 'Veterans Advisory Board' and worked tirelessly to successfully secure funding to launch the program in Dutchess County and preserve it in Putnam. In 2018, despite the fact that funding for the program was omitted from the Governor's Executive Budget Proposal, the New York State Senate was able to secure over \$3 million throughout the budget negotiation process, an increase of \$645,000 from the previous year.

This year, while the Governor signaled support for expanding the program throughout New York in his State of the State Address, he did not include any funding for the Dwyer Program in his 2019-2020 Executive Budget Proposal. The State Senate has long been the legislative body to successfully advocate for the funding's inclusion in the final State Budget, and Senator Serino joined with her colleagues and veteran program representatives to call on Albany leadership to include funding for this vitally important initiative in this year's budget. The press conference was hosted by Senator John Brooks, Chair of the Senate's Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs.

As a result of the push, funding was included in the Senate's One House Budget Proposal to not only preserve the program in its current counties, but to expand it to areas in New York City. The final State Budget did the same, a clear sign of the program's impressive effectiveness and importance to diverse communities throughout the state. Both Dutchess and Putnam counties will once again each receive \$185,000 to continue the program.

Senator Serino continued, "I cannot thank our veterans enough who took the time to make their voices heard in support of this program, not only for their service for our country, but for their continued service to our community in these tireless efforts. I encourage any local veteran who is not yet involved with the program to get connected with this amazing program."

For more information on the Vet2Vet program in Dutchess County, please click [here](#). For information on the program in Putnam County, please click [here](#).

