



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

SERINO: STATE MUST MAKE PERMANENT COMMITMENT TO VETS

SUSAN SERINO January 22, 2021

| ISSUE: **2021 EXECUTIVE BUDGET, VETERANS, PFC JOSEPH P. DWYER VETERANS PEER SUPPORT PROJECT**



HYDE PARK, NY – Senator Sue Serino today is slamming the Executive Budget Proposal for once again failing to include funding to support the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Program—a critical initiative that supports veterans living with PTSD, TBI, addiction and mental health challenges. Serino is urging Albany to not only make the program a priority in this year’s budget, but to make it a permanent addition to the Governor’s Executive Proposal,

eliminating the need for members of the Legislature and New York veterans to jockey over funds.

“Year after year, support for this proven program grows exponentially, yet the Governor continues to leave it out of his Budget Proposal,” said Senator Sue Serino, a long-time advocate for the program. “The Dwyer Program saves lives, and it has never been more necessary than it is now as our veterans grapple with the tremendous challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Program leaders and those who utilize their services have enough to deal with without worrying about the need to lobby lawmakers for life-saving funding. I urge the Governor to take the steps necessary to include this funding in his 30 Day Budget Amendments. We owe it to these heroes to ensure that they are not left behind in this process, and I won’t stop fighting to ensure the program receives the full funding it deserves.”

Despite signaling support for expanding the program statewide in a previous State of the State Address, each year, the Governor has failed to include funding for the Dwyer Program in his Executive Budget Proposal. As a result, program leaders and New York veterans join lawmakers like Serino in actively advocating for the final budget to include the funding necessary to support the work of the program.

***Serino continued,** “While we have been successful in securing funding for the program each year, the veterans who utilize the services provided through the Dwyer Program need the peace of mind that it will continue uninterrupted, now more than ever. These heroes have already done their part to fight for us, they should not have to fight for this funding year after year.”*

Ensuring the funding is included in this year’s State Budget is all the more important given the fact that last year’s dedicated funding has still not been released by the state. In December, Serino wrote to members of the Senate Majority Conference urging them to take immediate action to release the funds. She also recently joined a letter signed by her Republican colleagues reiterating that call, [which can be viewed by clicking here](#).

Dutchess and Putnam Counties each receive \$185,000 annually to support the program—a drop in a State Budget projected to spend over \$190 billion.

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 2012 and originally served only four counties throughout the state. It uses a unique and confidential peer-to-peer counseling approach 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 had been expanded to over 20 counties and New York City.

When Senator Serino first took office, she was originally made aware of the program by members of her local ‘Veterans Advisory Board’ and worked tirelessly to successfully secure funding to launch the program in Dutchess County and preserve it in Putnam.

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