

NEW YORK  
STATE  
SENATE

ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247



January 14, 2021

Senator John Brooks  
Room 806 LOB  
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Brooks,

It has come to our attention that neither the Office of Mental Health (OMH) nor the Division of the Budget have been directed by the Senate Majority to release funding allocated in last year's budget for the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer-to-Peer Support Program. It is discouraging to see this critical funding held up, particularly amidst the current pandemic and the strain it has placed on the mental health of our New Yorkers' -- including our veterans.

The Legislature has consistently worked in a bipartisan fashion to fund the Dwyer program since its inception in 2012, helping veterans in twenty-four counties and New York City. The Senate Minority Conference writes you today to urge the Senate Majority to immediately take the steps necessary to make available the \$4,505,000 allocated in the 2020-2021 State Budget, as well as the remaining allocation for the program from the 2019-2020 State Budget.

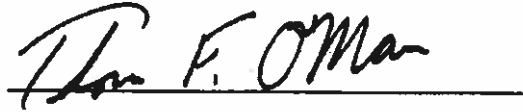
The mission of the Joseph P. Dwyer Program, to connect veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress or traumatic brain injury, has only become more important during the COVID-19 pandemic. At a time when social isolation aggravates mental illness and substance-abuse issues, the Joseph P. Dwyer Peer to Peer Support Program provides an invaluable lifeline for veterans. Additionally, as the economy continues to struggle, the Joseph P. Dwyer Program is an invaluable support for veterans struggling with housing and employment issues.

The Senate Minority Conference fully understands the fiscal limitations posed by the pandemic -- however, the Joseph P. Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Support Program is crucial for ensuring the well-being of veterans in New York State.

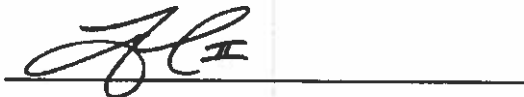
Our veterans continue to sacrifice so much for our state and our country. As policymakers, we often look for opportunities to honor their service. New York State made a commitment to our veterans; it's incumbent upon us to honor that commitment.



Senator Robert G. Ort



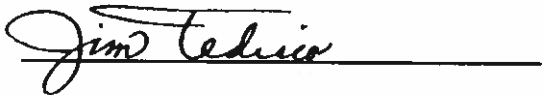
Senator Thomas F. O'Mara



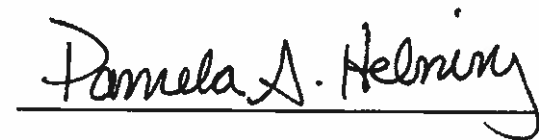
Senator Fred Akshar



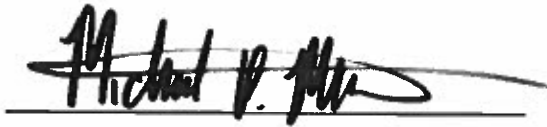
Senator Mario Mattera



Senator James Tedisco



Senator Pamela Helming



Senator Mike Martucci



Senator George M. Borello



Senator Daphne Jordan



Senator Patrick M. Gallivan



Senator Sue Serino



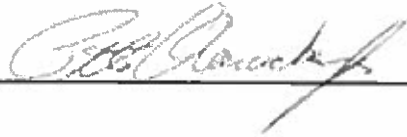
Senator Dan Stec



Senator Patty Ritchie



Senator Alexis Weik



Senator Peter Oberacker



Senator Edward Rath III



Senator Joseph A. Griffo



Senator Anthony H. Palumbo



Senator Andrew J Lanza



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