



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Secures \$50,000 to Strengthen North Country Health Care

PATTY RITCHIE September 20, 2017



State Senator Patty Ritchie is announcing she has secured \$50,000 to help the Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization (FDRHPO) upgrade vision care technology in the North Country.

The funding, part of a “Base Retention” grant Senator Ritchie successfully secured in the most recent state budget, will be used to purchase digital retina camera equipment (Diabetic TeleRetinopathy). Through detailed photographs, the equipment can detect abnormalities in the eye that may threaten vision. The equipment will be centrally located in a local primary

care facility deemed most necessary. That will allow patients—both military and civilian—to take early action for their health while drastically cutting their travel and wait time.

"This state-of-the-art camera equipment is another example of the unique relationship the North Country has with Fort Drum. When we work together and share resources, we all benefit," said Senator Ritchie. "I'm pleased to secure this funding, which will help to provide this critical health care advancement to not only our brave soldiers and military families, but also to our North Country families."

"The Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization is committed to evaluating, planning, and strengthening the North Country health care system in a way that improves the health of all living in our region," FDRHPO Executive Director Erika F. Flint said.

"Implementing Diabetic TeleRetinopathy will not only ease the burden on patients who would otherwise travel hours for this kind of specialty care, but it will also encourage new patients to get screened. We are thankful to Senator Ritchie for this funding, which will help offset the cost of expensive telemedicine equipment."

This new funding builds upon the \$350,000 Senator Ritchie recently secured to help strengthen Fort Drum and protect the installation from potential cuts.

Senator Ritchie played a key role in the creation of the Military Base Retention Fund in the State Budget, which was established in 2012. It has funded a number of Fort Drum-related resources including health care services for soldiers and their families, the purchases of critical equipment for the fire departments and first responders that serve Fort Drum and its surrounding communities and buffer areas around the post's perimeter to prevent development from encroaching on training areas.