



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## SERINO AND LOCAL VETERANS PUSH FOR FUNDING FOR PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

SUSAN SERINO February 27, 2019

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



ALBANY, NY—Senator Sue Serino continued her push to fund critical mental health services for New York’s veterans by joining a group of veterans from across the state at a press conference in Albany to advocate for State Budget funding for the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Services Peer-to-Peer Program (Vet2Vet).

*“Vet2Vet has saved lives,” said Senator Sue Serino. “This program is about heroes helping heroes cope with PTSD, TBI, addiction and other mental health challenges, and I have seen its success first-hand,*

*especially in Dutchess and Putnam counties. It is critically important that we continue to fund these successful programs in the State Budget to ensure that our veterans—those who have made tremendous sacrifices for all of us—have the ability to live their lives to the fullest when they return home.”*

The Dwyer Program—named for an Iraqi 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.

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

