



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## SERINO FIGHTS FOR VETERANS SUPPORT SERVICES

SUSAN SERINO February 12, 2020

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



ALBANY, NY—Senator Sue Serino is once again leading the fight to fund a program that plays a critical role in ensuring local veterans have access to the resources they need to thrive here in our community. With funding for the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer-to-Peer Support Program (Vet2Vet) once again left out of the Governor's Executive Budget Proposal, Senator Serino today stood with veterans and a bi-partisan group of lawmakers to call on legislative leaders to fully fund the program in this year's state budget.

*“Vet2Vet saves lives,” said Senator Sue Serino. “That’s reason enough to ensure that it is funded by the state consistently. Our servicemen and women have made tremendous sacrifices for all of us, and they shouldn’t have to schlep up to Albany each and every year to fight for this critically important funding. This program works, and funding it should always be a top priority. I urge my colleagues to come together to not only fully fund the program, but to work towards expanding it statewide.”*

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 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 has been expanded to 24 counties and New York City.

When Senator Serino 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 2019, the Governor signaled support for expanding the program throughout New York in his State of the State Address, but no funding was actually included for the Dwyer Program in his 2019-2020 Executive Budget Proposal. Thanks to the tireless advocacy of the veterans and legislative leaders like Senator Serino, the program did receive the funding that it needed to continue in the final State Budget.

This year, while the Governor included \$5 million in his Executive Budget Proposal to help provide housing for homeless veterans and \$1 million to support suicide prevention efforts among veterans and first responders, no funding was expressly included to support the Dwyer Program.

**Senator Serino, continued saying,** *“If the state has \$5 million to dedicate to extending the state fair for a few days, we have the \$4.4 million it would take to maintain and expand the Dwyer Program. I govern by listening and our veterans are telling us that the Dwyer Program is indispensable. These new programs will be great additions to the services we currently offer, but they cannot come at the expense of a*

*program that we know is needed and successful.”*

Today’s 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](#).