



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

## Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt Demands For Dwyer Program Funding To Be Released

ROBERT G. ORTT February 5, 2021

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



Today, New York State Senate Minority Leader Rob Ortt took part in the State Legislature's Mental Hygiene budget hearing where he demanded answers as to why the Governor did not include the Joseph P. Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Support Program in the executive budget for 2021-2022 and most importantly what is causing the holdup of the full \$4.5 million promised to veterans last year.

The Dwyer Peer Support Program is a mental health program that focuses on assisting veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injuries to work through daily life challenges.

Leader Ortt has been instrumental in securing funding for the Dwyer Program, and his efforts have helped expand the program to numerous new counties that previously did not have services.

“As a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army and a combat veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom, I have seen first-hand the horrors of war,” said Leader Ortt. “During my time as Chair of the Senate’s Mental Health Committee and ranker of the Senate’s Veterans Committee, I also saw the scars that remained with our service members once they returned home and the challenges they face living day-to-day life. This program is specifically designed to prevent the 17 veteran suicides that happen each day around our country – a number that is sadly certain to rise due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased amount of isolation we see amongst all Americans.”

In last year’s State budget, \$4.5 million was secured for funding the state’s Dwyer Program, yet nearly 20 percent of that funding has yet to be released by the New York State Division of Budget to service providers. Leader Ortt questioned OMH Commissioner Sullivan as to why this funding has not been released.

When asked why all allocated funding for the Dwyer Program in last year’s budget had not been released, Commissioner Sullivan pointed to a failure by the Legislature’s Majority to properly fill out all necessary paperwork. She also had no explanation as to why \$4.5 million, or .0023 percent of the state’s \$193 billion budget, for the Dwyer Program, was not included in the Governor’s 2021-2022 budget proposal.

“We cannot afford to play these budgetary games; these are crucial funds that must be dedicated year after year to our veteran community. The remaining funds must get out the door immediately, and we must ensure that new funding is allocated in the year’s budget. It’s the least we can do to help the men and women who risked their lives to protect our freedoms.”

Senator Rob Ortt is a Bronze Star recipient and is also a recipient of the Combat Infantry Badge, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Afghan Campaign Medal.