



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

SERINO JOINS HUDSON VALLEY VETS & BIPARTISAN COALITION TO FIGHT FOR VET2VET FUNDING

SUSAN SERINO February 13, 2021

ISSUE: **VETERANS, VET2VET, JOSEPH P. DWYER VETERANS PEER TO PEER PROGRAM**



HYDE PARK, NY – With the state actively withholding funds from a key program that helps empower veterans living with PTSD, TBI, addiction and other mental health challenges, Senator Sue Serino recently joined a bipartisan group of lawmakers and Hudson Valley veterans at a virtual press conference to urge the state to fulfill its financial obligation and to fight for full funding for the programs in this year's State Budget. The program, known as the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer-to Peer Program (Vet2Vet) serves veterans in over twenty

counties including Dutchess and Putnam.

Senator Sue Serino said, "After all that our veterans have done for our country, and our communities, we have a duty to ensure they continue to have access to the services they rely on. Budget challenges or not, to withhold funds from such a critical initiative is truly shameful. The Dwyer Program (Vet2Vet) saves lives and there is no other program like it. Few programs galvanize such consistent bipartisan support as Vet2Vet, and I remain committed to working alongside my colleagues to ensure these programs receive every last dollar they were promised in the last budget and full funding in the upcoming one."

While the program was fully funded in the 2020-21 State Budget, the final budget passed with a catch as it empowered the Governor to unilaterally cut funding for programs included in it should the state's budget become unbalanced. Despite Serino's outspoken push to restore the full funding at the time, she ultimately voted against the budget because she did not believe this vital funding should ever be subject to such cuts.

Both Dutchess and Putnam County were designated to receive \$185,000 for their respective programs.

Today's press conference was hosted by the Hudson Valley Center for Veteran Reintegration in Kingston, NY and featured a bipartisan group of State Lawmakers and County Executive's from the Hudson Valley Region and Long Island, including Congressman Lee Zeldin (R) who launched the program as a State Senator in 2012, and State Senator John Brooks (D), Chair of the Senate's Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs. The event also featured personal testimonies from those who have utilized the services provided by the Dwyer Program. All those participating spoke to the effectiveness of the program and advocated for the immediate release of funds that were promised in 2020 and for over \$4.5 million to be included in the 2021-22 Budget to maintain the program going forward.

The Joseph P. Dwyer Peer Support Program, named after PFC. Joseph Dwyer, an army veteran who lost his life to PTSD, offers non-clinical support by veterans to veterans and

works to ensure they have access to the resources they need to thrive in civilian life.

Senator Serino first became aware of the program through her Veterans Advisory Board, which she created in her first term in office and was able to successfully bring the program to Dutchess County. Since then, she has successfully advocated to preserve the programs in both Dutchess and Putnam County each year.

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