



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## SERINO JOINS PUSH TO MAKE VET2VET FUNDING PERMANENT

SUSAN SERINO March 26, 2021

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



ALBANY, NY – With the April 1<sup>st</sup> state budget deadline fast approaching, Senator Sue Serino joined her Legislative colleagues once again in calling for the Joseph P. Dwyer Program to be restored in the Final State Budget and made a permanent part of all future State Budgets.

*“Year after year, veterans have to fight tooth and nail to ensure that funding for the Joseph P. Dwyer Program is included in the Final State Budget so that they can continue to do the critical work of serving veterans’ needs on the ground, in our communities,” said Senator Sue Serino. “We know this program saves lives, and it’s far past time that this program becomes a permanent part of the New York State*

*Budget. I proudly join my colleagues in calling for the Governor to do right by our veterans and make sure this funding is included in the final enacted budget, and made a permanent fixture in New York budgets to come.”*

The State Senate Majority’s One-House Budget included approximately \$4.5 million to maintain the program in the more than 20 counties it currently serves. The Assembly Majority’s Budget proposed increasing the funding to over \$6million, allowing for the Dwyer Program to be expanded in other areas of the state. The Governor’s Executive Budget Proposal contained no funding for the much-lauded program. The three branches of government are actively negotiating a state budget, which would need to be passed by April 1<sup>st</sup> to be considered ‘on-time.’

Out of the existing \$4.5 million, both Dutchess and Putnam counties receive \$185,000 a year for their respective programs.

While \$4.5 million was included in the final 2020 State Budget, local Dwyer Programs did not receive their full funding until earlier this month—almost a full year after the budget’s passage—after a concerted push from Senator Sue Serino and a bipartisan group of lawmakers and local veterans. [To learn more about these efforts, click here.](#)

The Dwyer Program, named after PFC Joseph P. Dwyer, was initially launched in 2012 by then State Senator Lee Zeldin, and was designed to help veterans battling PTSD, TBI, or other mental illnesses by creating a peer support group run exclusively by fellow veterans. Now Congressman Zeldin joined the press conference in support of making the funding for this vital program a permanent part of the State Budget.

Serino first learned of the program in 2015 from her Veterans Advisory Board when she first took office, and worked to successfully secure funding to expand the program to Dutchess County, as well as preserve funding for the program in Putnam County, and has since been

an outspoken advocate in continuing to fund it in both counties and across the state.

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