



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

Ortt & Hawley Announce Dwyer Budget Success

ROBERT G. ORTT April 14, 2021

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



Today, New York State Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt was joined by Assemblyman Steve Hawley, Orleans County Chairwoman Lynne Johnson, and Orleans County Veterans Services Director Nancy Traxler in announcing over half of a million dollars in New York's 2021-2022 fiscal budget for the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer to Peer Program.

The final enacted budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year included \$4,505,000 for the Dwyer Program across New York State, with \$185,000 allocated for Niagara County, \$185,000 for Monroe County, and \$185,000 for Orleans, Genesee, and Wyoming Counties.

The inclusion of over \$4.5 million is a major success for the veterans of New York State, as Gov. Cuomo's Executive Budget cut funding for this veteran's mental health program completely.

"I am proud to have fought to restore this vital, life-saving funding into this year's budget so that veterans may get the mental health assistance they need and deserve. It is shameful that Gov. Cuomo opted to cut the funding for this program completely in his Executive Budget, but its inclusion in the final state budget is welcome news," said Senator Rob Ortt. "22 veterans a day take their lives due to the lingering effects of their service at nearly 1.5 times the rate of the general population. This funding will help connect those suffering from the invisible scars of war with the assistance they need to survive, and we must continue the fight to ensure this program is a permanent fixture in the budget every year."

"To think that funding for this vital program was ever on the chopping block is incredibly disheartening, and I am grateful to my colleagues in the Legislature for preserving this program as the governor tried to defund it entirely," said Assemblyman Steve Hawley. "For many veterans, the hardship they face persists even after they return from duty, and we should be doing all we can to help them in their struggles for all they do for us and our nation. As a veteran myself and member of the Assembly Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I can't say enough how much of an impact programs such as the Dwyer program have on the lives of soldiers returning to civilian life and how disastrous losing such an important program would be."

"I am grateful for colleagues who share the belief that our veterans should be prioritized, not marginalized," said Lynne Johnson, Chairwoman of the Orleans County Legislature. "Our commitment to the Dwyer program should not diminish in a pandemic or if the state budget happens to be tight. Combat servicemen and women did not have the luxury of being fickle

in the call of duty. Legislators should be held to the same standard.”

“I am happy to hear that the funding for the PFC Dwyer Peer to Peer Program was added to the budget this year,” said Nancy Traxler, Director of the Orleans County Veterans’ Service Office. “Veterans all over New York are being helped by this program, and it would have been a great loss to the veteran community had this funding not been added back into the budget. I would like to thank Senator Ortt for fighting for this worthy cause.”

On March 24, Sen. Ortt was joined by Congressman Lee Zeldin and his colleagues in the Senate Republican Conference to call for Dwyer Program funding’s full restoration in the 2021-2022 State Budget.

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