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Date: Friday, August 14, 2020 06:01PM
Subject: Weekly Wrap: Celebrating more Purple Heart Communities, seeking answers on nursing homes & advocating for our health care heroes



Dear Friend:

It was another busy week here in the 43rd Senate District as last Friday and Saturday, I proudly honored two new local Purple Heart Communities! Becoming a Purple Heart Community is a fantastic, patriotic way to honor America's military heroes who sacrificed so much for our freedom. So far, there are 32 local Purple Heart Communities across my 43rd Senate District, with many more soon to come. I'm thrilled to lead this non-partisan effort!

This week also featured Joint Legislative Hearings seeking answers to NY's COVID-19 nursing home crisis, as well as public hearings focused on COVID-19's impact on our workforce and military veterans, respectively. As a member of the Senate's Standing Committee on Banks and Veterans, Homeland Security, and Military Affairs (a Committee that I was recently appointed to), I was proud to take part in both of these important public hearings.

Also on the hearing front, in this week's Wrap, you'll read about my thoughts on State Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker's testimony that was woefully incomplete and lacking in the answers and accountability that I and so many New Yorkers have demanded regarding the state's disastrous mandate that forced nursing homes to accept COVID-19 positive patients and caused the preventable deaths of 6,400 senior citizens in the process.

In addition, this week I continued advocating for my legislation that would establish a new health care worker peer-to-peer support program, modeled after the successful Dwyer Program for our military veterans. During these difficult times, our health care workers have stepped up to battle this ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, and I'm proud to advocate for this important legislation.

It's an honor and a privilege serving as your State Senator and I always want to hear your thoughts, comments, and concerns. If my office and I can be of assistance, please call at (518) 371-2751, or email me at jordan@nysenate.gov. Thank you! – **Senator Daphne Jordan, 43rd District**

Honoring the Town of Hoosick at their “Purple Heart Day” Ceremony



Last Friday, I was honored to be in the Town of Hoosick to celebrate its establishment as a Purple Heart Community and observe “National Purple Heart Day.” I’m pictured above presenting Town Supervisor Mark Surdam with a framed New York State Senate Proclamation honoring the special occasion! Also in attendance was Rensselaer County Veteran’s Services Director Peter Goebel, and Tom Grant, Chief of Staff for NYS Assemblyman Jake Ashby.

As mentioned above, I'm proud to be leading this non-partisan effort that successfully established 32 local Purple Heart Communities throughout my 43rd Senate District, honoring the courage and commitment of Purple Heart recipients. The Purple Heart is the oldest, and among the most venerated, American military decorations awarded in the name of the President to those wounded or killed while serving, on or after April 5, 1917, with the U.S. Military. God bless all of America’s Purple Heart recipients!

Celebrating the Town of Copake becoming a Purple Heart Community



On Saturday, it was terrific taking part in the Town of Copake's patriotic Purple Heart Ceremony, where we recognized four Purple Heart recipients (two of these patriots were deceased, so we respectfully honored their memories and faithful service to America). The Copake Town Board passed a resolution to become a Purple Heart Town just before Saturday's ceremony. We also formally unveiled the new Purple Heart sign placed in front of Copake Town Hall. It is a spectacular sign (shown above) and such a wonderful tribute and recognition of these true heroes.

I'm also pictured above presenting Copake Town Supervisor Jeanne Mettler with a framed NYS Senate Proclamation to mark the special occasion. I'm also featured with Command Sergeant Major Gary Flaherty, Director of the Columbia County Veteran's Services Agency. We honored 90-years-young veteran Avery (aka Prope) Dietter, who was proudly wearing his original Purple

Heart Pin from the Korean War.

We also recognized the service of Richard Barton, who was wounded in 1967 while serving in Vietnam, Clayton Broughton, whose niece, Donna Boughton, accepted a NYS Senate Certificate on his behalf, and Gary Alan Peck. God bless all of America's Purple Heart heroes, and congratulations to the Town of Copake.

To learn more about how your community can pass a local resolution and become the latest Purple Heart Community, call my office at (518) 371-2751 and ask for my Community Liaison Debbie Curto who can provide more information.

Seeking answers about the state's tragic nursing home mandate



I was incredibly disappointed with the recent nursing home public hearing, specifically, the incomplete testimony delivered by State Department of Health (DOH) Commissioner Howard Zucker.

Commissioner Zucker was woefully unprepared to answer questions and lacked data as to how many COVID-19 positive nursing home residents were sent to hospitals and tragically died there (and thus were not counted as nursing home deaths due to COVID-19). Worse, Commissioner Zucker didn't even stay to answer questions from all Committee members.

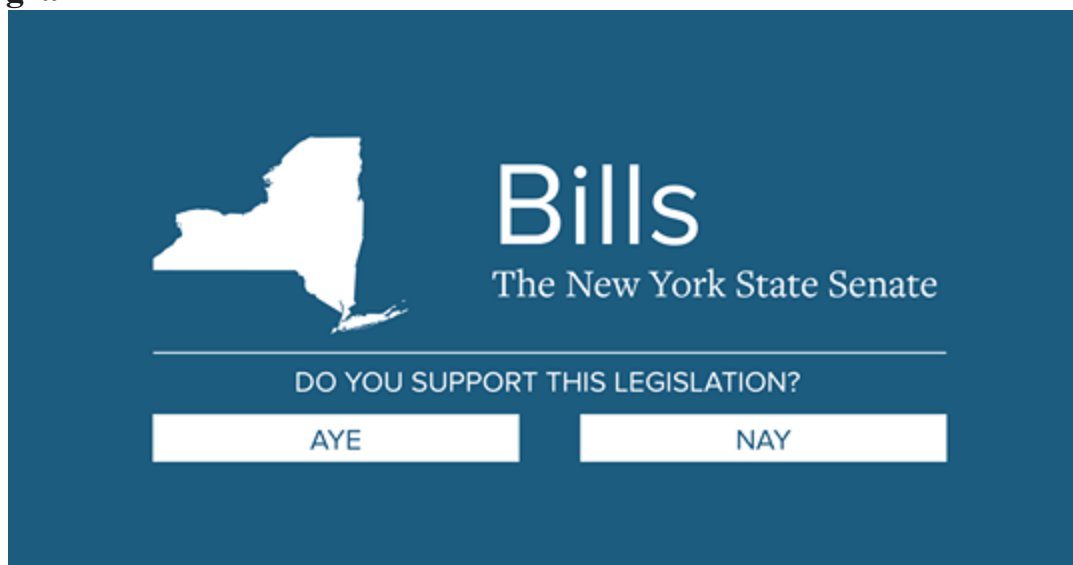
The DOH's continued secrecy and failure to provide the requested data on such an important issue is unacceptable. Families who are grieving and lost a loved one in a nursing home due to the state's reckless mandate that these facilities

accept COVID-19 positive patients deserve accountability and answers.

Senate Democrats could have – and should have – used the full power of the Senate and sent subpoenas to the Cuomo Administration and DOH officials as my Senate Republican colleagues and I publicly called for weeks ago.

I will continue my push for an independent state and federal investigation into the preventable nursing home tragedies that claimed the lives of 6,400 senior citizens, possibly double that tragic figure. This hearing was just the latest example of why we need true checks and balances in state government.

Advocating for my bill enacting a “Health Care Worker Peer Support” Program



During Wednesday’s Joint Public Hearing on COVID-19 and Hospitals in Albany, a great question was asked regarding whether hospitals made mental health services available to staff due to its similarity to PTSD. A respiratory therapist replied that he received “therapy from people I work with and they understand.”

Without question, peer support is absolutely critical in the effective provision of counseling services.

That's why I'm continuing to push for the enactment of my legislation establishing a "Health Care Worker Peer Support Program" modeled on the highly successful PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Veteran's Counseling Program that I've advocated in support of and delivered funding for.

I spoke about my bill during Thursday’s public hearing for the panel with PEF

President Wayne Spence, and NYS Nurse's Association Executive Director Pat Kane, who expressed the need for their members to have mental health support.

Many more details on and coverage of my bill are shared below.

Health Care Worker Peer Support Program legislation:

<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2019/s8371>

Health Care Worker Peer Support Program press release:

Senator Daphne Jordan calls for enactment of “Health Care Worker Peer Support Program”

Senator Jordan’s initiative is modeled after the successful PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Veteran’s Counseling Program, would provide counseling services for health care workers courageously serving on the frontlines of NY’s COVID-19 response.

Halfmoon, NY – New York State Senator Daphne Jordan (R,C,I-Halfmoon) today called for enactment of her legislation establishing a “Health Care Worker Peer Support Program” to provide critical support and counseling services for New York’s courageous health care heroes that have been serving on the frontlines of the COVID-19 outbreak for months.

Senator Jordan’s legislation, Senate Bill S.8371, would amend the State’s Mental Hygiene Law, to enact the “Health Care Worker Peer Support Program” to provide counseling services, delivered by peers, for health care workers. The measure also would establish an annual appropriation through the State Budget to ensure proper funding via the State Office of Mental Health for the new initiative. The new program would be modeled on the successful PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Veteran’s Counseling Program that has been widely hailed for its efficacy.

The critical need for the creation of a peer-to-peer program for health care workers was evidenced during today’s Joint Public Hearing on COVID-19 and Hospitals convened by the State Senate and State Assembly, respectively. During a hearing panel focused on nursing, a question was asked as to whether hospitals made mental health services available to staff due to its similarity to wartime Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). A respiratory therapist replied

that he received “therapy from people I work with and they understand.” Such peer support can be critical in the effective provision of counseling services.

“New York’s frontline health care workforce has been working non-stop since the COVID outbreak, putting in exhausting, long hours under incredibly difficult, demanding, and dangerous conditions. Our health care heroes have saved countless lives and provided critical care that’s made a positive difference. The outbreak of COVID-19 revealed and reminded us of the heroism and depths of sacrifice that health care workers are willing to make to protect and serve their fellow New Yorkers. Establishing a Health Care Worker Peer Support Program modeled on the successful Dwyer Program is one way we can deliver much-needed peer support services for our health care heroes,” Senator Jordan said.

Several news outlets have cited the fact that many health care workers battling the COVID-19 outbreak have experienced anxiety and depression, as well as a potential for lasting PTSD. These negative mental effects have serious, long-term consequences. On April 28, 2020, it was reported that Dr. Lorna Breen, a New York City area emergency room doctor who not only treated COVID-19 patients but contracted it herself, tragically committed suicide.

Senator Jordan’s bill aims to prevent the recurrence of such tragedies by using a well-established support methodology and establishing a peer-to-peer support program modeled on the successful PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Veteran’s Counseling Program which provides mental health support to military veterans by providing for a confidential, peer-to-peer approach.

Senator Jordan’s legislation also would provide appropriations for the support of the program that, going forward, would be subject to formal appropriations in the annual State Budget process. Senator Jordan’s bill utilizes tried-and-true smart solutions to mental health problems, would provide peace of mind to health care workers in the future, and also help New York State lead the way in doing all it can for these heroic individuals serving on the frontlines of health care.

State of Politics news article on my Health Care Worker Peer Support Program legislation: <https://nystateofpolitics.com/state-of-politics/new-york/ny-state-of-politics/2020/08/13/bill-seeks-to-boost-counseling-services-for-health-care-workers>.

Food Distribution Event in Chatham



On Monday, August 31, from 10 a.m. to noon, there will be a free food distribution event at the Columbia County Fairgrounds in Chatham. This upcoming free food distribution event will be co-sponsored by Catholic Charities and the Regional Food Bank in Latham, in collaboration with Catholic Charities, Mobile Outreach Vehicle Extension (MOVE), and the Chatham, Ghent, and Valatie Food Pantries. As at the previous event in May, the public is welcome, with no income limits.

In addition to non-perishable foods and fresh fruits and vegetables, interagency directories will be given away so that individuals can be informed to meet future needs. Social distancing and wearing masks will be expected of walkers. Volunteers will place food directly into the trunks of vehicles as they arrive.

Please note: Catholic Charities Emergency Assistance Fund is also available to assist with lost income due to COVID-19.

Proudly recognizing more Hometown Heroes for my 43rd Senate District

Thank you!



Proud to again recognize some terrific #HometownHeroes from my 43rd Senate District for all they're doing to help the community.




SENATOR DAPHNE JORDAN
recognizes the 43rd Senate District's
Hometown Heroes

WWW.JORDAN.NYSENATE.GOV



When I launched “Hometown Heroes” several months ago, my goal was to salute the people, small businesses, and non-profits that go out of their way to make the 43rd Senate District such a special place to live, work, raise a family, and run or start a small business. I’m pleased that this latest edition of my Hometown Heroes continues this important tradition!

The Hometown Heroes recognized here are East Greenbush Police Officer John Witko and Regeneration of Rensselaer. Hats off to both of these Hometown

Heroes for their demonstrated support, concern, and care for helping the community. The 43rd Senate District is a better place thanks to your compassion and generosity!

Josh Witko, East Greenbush Police

East Greenbush Police Officer Josh Witko observed a young boy operating a “blue Mercedes” without a seatbelt. Young Liam requested “Officer Josh” to come and say hello for his birthday so he could see the police car. Officer Witko issued Liam a teddy bear and ice cream coupon before heading to the next call.

Regeneron

Regeneron employees in Rensselaer held their fifth annual food drive to benefit the Regional Food Bank and collected more than 56,000 items – weighing in at nearly 25,000 pounds! This year’s event will directly benefit local families in need and dealing with food insecurity during these unprecedented and challenging times.

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