

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY LEGISLATURE

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



March 5, 2013

The Honorable Jeffrey D. Klein
Co-President & IDC Coalition Leader
New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building, Room 913
Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable Dean G. Skelos
Temporary President and Majority Coalition Leader
New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building, Room 909
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senators Klein and Skelos:

As members of the Suffolk County Legislature, we are writing to request that funding for the PFC Joseph Dwyer Veterans Peer-to-Peer Program be extended and made permanent. This vital program provides critical services to our veteran population and is especially needed as our servicemen and women begin to return home from deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq. This pilot program is funded this year through a grant secured by State Senator Lee Zeldin.

As you know, Suffolk County is home to the largest veterans population in New York State. Many veterans are returning home during a time of high unemployment after multiple deployments. Many are suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or the effects of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). To compound matters, Suffolk County veterans often return home one or two at a time without the support systems that a military base provides. Many of our returning veterans are reluctant to seek the help they need and are fearful that asking for help may jeopardize their ability to secure employment or housing. Over the past few years, the number of veterans who have taken their own lives has increased dramatically. These losses are heartbreaking and may well be preventable. PFC Joseph Dwyer, for whom this program is named, was one of those we lost.

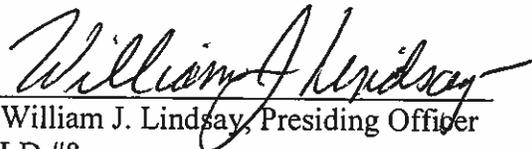
The program named for PFC Dwyer has been very successful at reaching our veterans and providing needed support in a non-threatening and confidential setting. This program enables our veterans to share their military experiences, ease their concerns regarding life issues

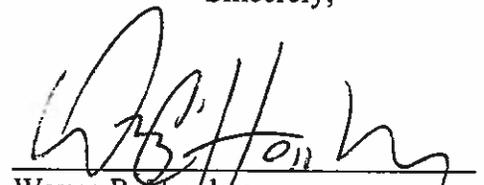
and transitioning from military to civilian life and receive support from others who understand and are experiencing the same challenges.

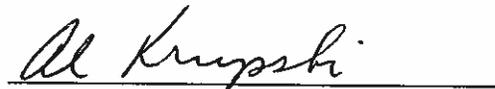
The program now has seven full time weekly groups meeting with a new group scheduled to begin this week. The program currently serves 78 veterans and is supported by all Veterans Service Organizations in Suffolk County. There are meetings across Long Island from Babylon to Yaphank, enabling our veterans to receive assistance without having to travel a great distance. The Dwyer Peer-to-Peer program has responded to five call-outs from veterans in crisis and is serving at least one veteran who was a victim of military sexual trauma. Counselors receive training from nationally recognized veterans organizations and we have received an inquiry from the National Institutes of Health about our program.

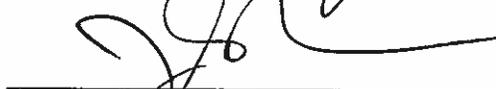
As our servicemen and women continue to return home, there will be an increased need for these services. We owe the brave men and women who sacrifice so much for our great nation more than platitudes. We owe them and their families the highest level of care and respect. We must let them know that they are not alone. We respectfully request that funding for the PFC Joseph Dwyer Veterans Peer-to-Peer Program be extended and made permanent.

Sincerely,

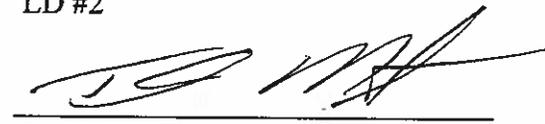

William J. Lindsay, Presiding Officer
LD #8


Wayne R. Horsley
Deputy Presiding Officer, LD #5


Legislator Al Krupski
LD #1


Legislator Jay H. Schneiderman
LD #2

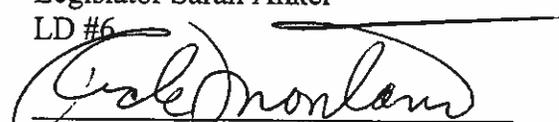

Legislator Kate M. Browning
LD #3

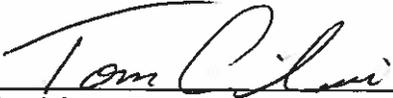

Legislator Thomas Muratore
LD #4


Legislator Kara Hahn
LD #5

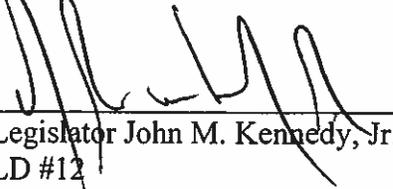

Legislator Sarah Anker
LD #6


Legislator Robert Calarco
LD #7


Legislator Ricardo Montano
LD #9



Legislator Tom Cilmi
LD #10



Legislator John M. Kennedy, Jr.
LD #12



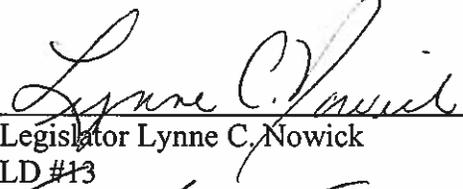
Legislator DuWayne Gregory
LD #15



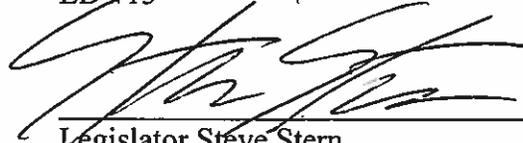
Legislator Lou D' Amaro
LD #17



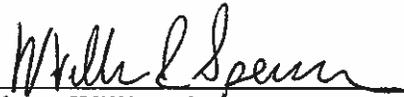
Legislator Thomas F. Barraga
LD #11



Legislator Lynne C. Nowick
LD #13



Legislator Steve Stern
LD #16



Legislator William Spencer
LD #18

cc: Senator Lee Zeldin
Legislative Office Building-Room 802
Albany, NY 12247