

**NEW YORK**  
**STATE**  
**SENATE**

**RANKING MINORITY MEMBER**  
RACING, GAMING AND WAGERING  
STATE-NATIVE AMERICAN RELATIONS

**COMMITTEE MEMBER**  
AGRICULTURE  
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ETHICS



**SENATOR DAPHNE JORDAN**  
43<sup>RD</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

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February 14, 2020

Governor Andrew Cuomo  
NYS Capitol, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Albany, NY 12224

Temporary President & Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
Room 330 State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12247

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie  
Room 932 LOB  
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Governor Cuomo, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie:

I write requesting restoration of \$3.7 million in funding for the Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer-to-Peer Program within the final 2020-21 State Budget. This funding restoration is of vital importance for New York's veterans who served with patriotism, professionalism, and pride.

Created through the 2012-13 State Budget, the Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer-to-Peer Program is a groundbreaking initiative that helps veterans dealing with the invisible wounds of war, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and depression. The program empowers veterans to meet with other veterans in a safe, secure, comfortable atmosphere so they may help one another by providing life-saving counseling services and support. Military veterans are much more likely to confer in, and trust, their peers who have endured similar experiences.

The urgent need for this program is without question as an estimated 400,000 service members live with depression, PTSD, and TBI. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has estimated that 11% to 20% of returning soldiers from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom suffer from PTSD. Additionally, individuals suffering from PTSD are six times more likely to commit suicide.

Last year, after the Legislature's successful restoration, funding for this life-saving program totaled \$3.7 million, reaching 23 counties across our state, including Columbia (\$100,000), Rensselaer (\$145,000), and Saratoga (\$185,000), all of which reside in my 43<sup>rd</sup> Senate District. Saratoga County's Peer-to-Peer program, in particular, has been continually recognized for its excellence in helping veterans and should serve as a model for the rest of our state.



Funding for veterans' programs is not a luxury; it is a priority. The Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer-to-Peer Program is wholly deserving of a full restoration in the 2020-21 State Budget.

Thank you for your consideration of this budgetary request seeking a \$3.7 million restoration in Dwyer Program funding, and the specific amounts of \$185,000 for Saratoga County, \$145,000 for Rensselaer County, and \$100,000 for Columbia County, respectively. I am proud to make this request on behalf of our military veterans and their families who have served and sacrificed for our grateful nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daphne V. Jordan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Daphne Jordan

State Senator, 43<sup>rd</sup> District

Gary Flaherty, Director, Columbia County Veterans Services

Peter Goebel, Director, Rensselaer County Veterans Service Agency

Frank McClement, Director, Saratoga County Veterans Service Agency

Cc: Shawn MacKinnon, Director, Minority Finance Committee