

2018 Legislative Action Agenda

Support Veteran's Mental Health

Supporting those who have served our country must be a top priority. We call on the Legislature and the Governor to assist veterans on all issues, but specifically those relating to mental health; our veterans deserve nothing less.

Returning combat veterans are experiencing very high rates of serious mental health disorders, suicide, addiction, homelessness and incarceration related to posttraumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. More must be done in New York to provide services to America's returning heroes of combat.

- Nationally, 20 percent of returning veterans live with post-traumatic stress disorder, but only half seek and receive treatment for this condition.
- This means of the almost one-million veterans living in New York State, approximately 100,000 are not receiving necessary treatment. Clearly, this is not acceptable, and reform must take place to improve the access and affordability of mental health services for veterans.
- The VA estimates that nationally there are 107,000 veterans homeless on any given night. Most of these suffer from PTSD or another serious mental illness. (Of all homeless men, it is estimated that 40 percent of them served in the armed forces).

Although New York State has taken tremendous strides and funding for mental health treatment has increased in recent years, significant numbers of veterans with serious mental illness are still falling through the cracks because they are not getting the services they need.

We must increase funding for mental health and medical treatment for veterans with serious mental illness. Ensure that monies designated for mental health and substance abuse treatment for veterans are allocated to Veterans Medical Centers, Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) and other programs serving veterans with mental illness and utilized for the treatment of these individuals.

We have a moral obligation to provide our veterans the best and most readily available services we can offer.