



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

Fuschillo Legislation to Expand Access to Vaccines Signed by Governor Cuomo

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. July 19, 2012

| ISSUE: **HEALTH**

New Law Adds Shingles Vaccine to the List of Vaccinations Pharmacists are Permitted to Administer

Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R-Merrick) announced that legislation he sponsors to give residents greater access to vaccines has been signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo.

The new law adds the shingles vaccine to the list of immunizations that trained licensed pharmacists are permitted to administer to adults when ordered by a patient's physician or nurse practitioner.

"Residents can help protect themselves from shingles by getting a vaccine but many physicians do not carry it, making it difficult to obtain. Enabling trained pharmacists to administer the shingles vaccine will make it far more accessible and better protect individuals from a painful and dangerous disease. I'm pleased Governor Cuomo has approved this legislation," said Senator Fuschillo.

Under a 2008 law authored by Senator Fuschillo, licensed pharmacists were previously permitted to administer only flu and pneumonia vaccines to adults. Over 7,500 pharmacists have been certified to administer immunizations by the State Education Department since the law's inception, according to the Pharmacists Society of the State of New York. As of

June 30, 2011, pharmacists have vaccinated approximately 663,793 individuals for influenza and pneumococcal disease, according to the New York State Department of Health Bureau of Immunization. The 2008 law successfully improved public health by increasing access to vaccines for many New Yorkers both conveniently and economically.

Allowing trained pharmacists to administer the shingles vaccine will significantly expand access to the vaccine. The shingles vaccine is a pharmacy benefit covered under Medicare Part D, meaning physicians cannot be reimbursed for it. The vaccine must also be kept frozen and used within thirty minutes after it has thawed. Consequently, many physicians offices do not have the vaccine on hand, making it harder for residents to access it.

Shingles is a viral disease characterized by a painful skin rash with blisters. Along with being severely painful, shingles can be potentially debilitating, causing eye damage and vision loss if it develops on the face. In some cases, shingles can cause nerve damage which results in prolonged periods of pain lasting months or even years. The Centers for Disease Control recommends the shingles vaccine for individuals ages 60 and over.

The new law takes effect on October 16th.