



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kevin S. Parker

## Senator Parker Addresses Celiac Disease and Gluten Intolerance

KEVIN S. PARKER May 31, 2013

| ISSUE: **HEALTH**



(Albany, NY) In honor of Celiac Awareness Month, Senator Kevin Parker (D-21) proposed his Celiac Awareness Package consisting of four bills that address significant challenges faced by individuals affected by celiac disease or gluten intolerance.

“For years I have believed New York must pass legislation that addresses the needs of the many New Yorkers suffering from gluten intolerance or celiac disease,” said Senator Parker.

“Recent research has shown that with a few simple precautions and a focus on education, we can make great strides in addressing celiac disease. My legislative package is a strong step

forward in that direction.”

Celiac disease is an autoimmune digestive disease that attacks the small intestine and interferes with absorption of nutrients from food. Celiac disease can affect men and women across all ages and races, and can lead to a number of other disorders including infertility, reduced bone density, neurological disorders, some cancers, and other autoimmune diseases.

“I believe there is a strong need for the schools to teach their students about gluten sensitivity and celiac disease,” said Sherry Lynn, owner of Sherry Lynn’s Gluten Free restaurant in Latham, New York. “Students should be able to focus on their school work and not upon feeling sick or being worried about whether the food they are served is safe to eat.”

The latest research estimates that 83% of Americans who have celiac disease are undiagnosed or misdiagnosed with other conditions. Approximately 15% of the United States population suffers from gluten intolerance of one form or another, ranging from gluten sensitivity to Celiac disease. Even more alarming is the fact that 6-10 years is the average time a person waits to be correctly diagnosed.

Legislation in this proposed package includes:

- **S.3199** Parker/**A.2574** Ortiz -- Requiring the commissioner of health to establish a means of educating proprietors and employees of public eating establishments about food allergens such as gluten allergies.
- **S.3087** Parker/**A.7646** Crespo -- Establishing the New York state celiac disease awareness and research fund and providing for education on celiac disease awareness.
- **S.3094** Parker/**A.7627** Crespo -- Requiring the notice of gluten content in foods being served in state owned, operated or leased cafeterias and all cafeterias operated by the state university of New York.
- **S.4283** Parker/**A.7648** Crespo -- Requiring gluten cross-contamination safeguards in food establishments owned, operated or leased by any department or agency of the state.

"Advances in medicine and clinical research have given us great insight into how nutrition impacts our overall health. Celiac disease and gluten intolerance affect millions of Americans, including hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. Every means available to policymakers must be taken to help those suffering from gluten intolerance. These measures include raising awareness of Celiac disease, properly training our health care professionals on this illness, requiring further disclosure of foods that contain gluten, and preventing cross contamination of foods with gluten. Thanks to the work of Senator Kevin Parker, these measures are now legislative proposals that needs to be enacted into law," stated Assemblyman Marcos A. Crespo, sponsor of three of the bills in this package and Chair of the Assembly Task Force on New Americans.

"I am proud to introduce legislation that will improve education and services for people suffering from this disease. The bills I am advocating for in this package will help provide much needed protections and services to individuals affected by celiac disease and gluten intolerance," continued Senator Parker. "Going forward, we must develop comprehensive programs that curtail the negative effects of the disease. I look forward to working with all of my colleagues to pass this legislative package."

### **About Senator Kevin Parker**

Senator Kevin S. Parker is intimately familiar with the needs of his ethnically diverse community in the heart of Brooklyn that consists of 318,000 constituents in Flatbush, East Flatbush, Midwood, Ditmas Park, Kensington, Windsor Terrace, and Park Slope. He is the Ranking Member of the Senate Energy and Telecommunications and the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Committees, Assistant Democratic Leader for Intergovernmental Affairs, and Chair of the Democratic Task Force on New Americans.

###