



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

Senators Skelos, Hannon and Martins Call for a Comprehensive Ebola Response Plan

DEAN G. SKELOS | October 15, 2014



New York State Senate Health Committee Chairman Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau), Senate Majority Co-Leader Dean G. Skelos (R, Rockville Centre) and Senator Jack Martins (R-C-I, Mineola) today called on state health, emergency services, and homeland security officials to immediately develop a comprehensive plan to address New York's readiness to combat the Ebola virus. They were joined by Victor F. Politi, M.D., FACP, FACEP, President and Chief Executive Officer of the NuHealth System/Nassau Health Care Corporation, and Nassau County Health Commissioner Lawrence E. Eisenstein, MD, FACP, at a press conference held at Nassau University Medical Center in East Meadow.

While New York is a leader in emergency preparedness efforts, the state is also home to one of the most active international airports in the world at John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK). As new cases of Ebola continue to be detected in the United States, the Senators are calling to expedite the development of an effective plan to detect and prevent Ebola in New York.

Senator Hannon said, “New York State has one of the most highly regarded health care systems in the world. We are blessed in that regard. However, we are also an international hub and must be prepared to act quickly to meet this current challenge.”

Senator Skelos said, “Ebola has reached our country and we must do everything we can to make sure our state is prepared to protect New Yorkers. By calling on the Department of Health to quickly establish an effective Ebola response plan, we will ensure that our medical facilities and first responders are equipped to handle such deadly diseases.”

Senator Martins said, “New York needs a coordinated, comprehensive approach to ensure that we are prepared to effectively respond to the Ebola virus. Making sure our network of hospitals, health care professionals, and first responders are all working together and have the resources they need, including right here on Long Island, is the best way to keep our residents safe.”

Senators Hannon, Skelos and Martins are directing the Department of Health to undertake an aggressive and thorough readiness review of the state’s hospitals and the larger health care delivery system to determine the level of preparedness if a case of Ebola is detected in New York.

New York State has highly capable medical facilities but does not have a hospital that has had a federal designation as a specialized unit to treat highly infectious diseases like Ebola. There are only four of these federally-designated hospitals that are bio-containment sites comprising 19 beds, which clearly provides limited capacity to handle any significant disease

outbreak. Included in the DOH review should be a specific recommendation on establishing one or more regional bio containment sites.

The Senators urged that recommendations developed as part of the preparedness plan should be developed quickly - within one month - and released in the form of a report.

The Senators are calling for the readiness assessment to include, but not be limited to: patient identification, isolation, and staff allocation; personal protective equipment; clinical management; environmental cleaning and waste management; and burial; laboratory requirements, and other protocols and precautions, especially for front line staff providing the care. The assessment should be transparent and identify strengths and weaknesses within the infrastructure and make recommendations for improvements.

In addition, on Friday, October 17, 2014, Senator Hannon will be leading a roundtable discussion in New York City with state officials, public and private health experts, and officials from other impacted sectors to discuss New York State's current level of preparedness for Ebola.

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