



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

Serino Champions Critical Lyme Legislation

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SERINO CHAMPIONS CRITICAL LYME LEGISLATION

Package of Bills to Combat Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases Passes in the Senate

ALBANY—Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) announced a major win for residents of the Hudson Valley and across New York who have been affected by Lyme and Tick -Borne Diseases. The NYS Senate today passed a package of bills sponsored by the freshman

Senator that will go a long way in combating and preventing these life-threatening diseases.

“Since taking office, I have heard story after devastating story of families and individuals whose lives have been forever changed by Lyme and tick-borne diseases,” said Senator Serino. “As Chair of the Senate Taskforce on Lyme and Tick-borne Diseases, I vowed to take a hard-hitting approach to combating these illnesses—especially Lyme—and today I am incredibly proud to deliver.”

According to the most recent reporting by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), New York State has the third highest number of confirmed cases of Lyme Disease in the entire country and according to the NYS Department of Health (DOH), while it started as an issue dominating Long Island and the Hudson Valley, it has quickly migrated to counties across New York. DOH also notes that since it became reportable in 1986, over 95,000 cases of Lyme have been reported to the Department.

The bills passed by the Senate are largely focused on education and prevention and have widespread bi-partisan support. They include:

S. 5803 which statutorily requires the Department of Health to design a Lyme and tick-borne disease prevention program to promote awareness and prevention methods.

“While I understand that there’s great debate throughout the medical community regarding how best to treat Lyme, it is commonly accepted that early education and prevention are key to controlling the spread of the disease,” continued Senator Serino. “Members of our community need to be aware of just how vulnerable they truly are to these illnesses if they are to protect themselves and this bill will require DOH to be proactive in facilitating public awareness.”

S. 5804 which directs the Commissioner of Education, in collaboration with the Commissioners of Health and Environmental Conservation, to develop instructional tools and materials to assist in the education and awareness program to protect children from Lyme Disease and tick-borne infections.

In her sponsor's memo, Senator Serino cites critical justification for this bill noting that children should have a visual instructional tool that helps them identify ticks, which vary in size from the time they are nymphs to adults and change in size when engorged. She also argues that children should understand the importance of how to respond when they find a tick on their body and that they should know where exposure to ticks is greatest so that they can check for them before they actually attach to the body.

“Earlier this year, I reached out to local schools and libraries in our area and offered to send free brochures on the topic to be shared with students and families in their district,” Serino said. “The response was overwhelming and thousands of brochures were requested immediately. There is clearly a demand for this information, however there is a lack of age-appropriate materials available for vulnerable, young school children.

We have a responsibility to protect the health and safety of New York's children and this bill aims to do that by providing appropriate materials and placing it directly in the classroom and in our libraries where students have easy access to the information they need.”

S. 5802 which directs the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation to develop guidelines for best practices in treating residential properties for integrated pest management—the goal ultimately being to rid communities of the ticks that contribute to debilitating infections.

Unable to fly and having an affinity for shady, moist areas close to the ground, ticks often populate bushes, shrubs, gardens and lawns. Therefore, by stopping the spread of Lyme and tick-borne diseases at the source, integrated pest management has the potential to help significantly reduce the population of infected ticks.

“Too-often homeowners are being taken advantage of and reports are surfacing of companies scamming residents into thinking they are protecting their lawns from ticks. Homeowners need a reliable source of information to turn to when looking for answers on how to best protect their property from ticks,” said Senator Serino. “They should be aware of the registered EPA approved pesticides that are recommended for tick prevention and the methods they can incorporate to better protect their families and their pets from exposure to ticks on their property and that’s what this bill does.”

All three bills have been sent to the Assembly for consideration where they are carried by Assemblywoman Didi Barrett.

Senator Serino Chairs the Senate's Task Force on Lyme and Tick Borne Diseases and as such has been relentless in her push to raise awareness for the issue. **She was successful earlier this year in securing an unprecedented \$600,000 in the 2015-16 State Budget** to combat these illnesses and is gearing up to launch a comprehensive website of important tools and resources.

She will be holding a public forum locally on June 30, 2015 at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum (Wallace Center Multipurpose Room) from 6:00-7:30 pm to provide important information to residents on preventing Lyme and tick-borne disease.

Members of the public and local media are encouraged to attend.

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