



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

## State Senator Gustavo Rivera Introduces Bill To Expand Medicaid Coverage To Include Blood-Based Testing For Allergies

GUSTAVO RIVERA May 4, 2016

| ISSUE: **HEALTH, ALLERGIES, MEDICAID, MEDICAID COVERAGE**

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### **STATE SENATOR GUSTAVO RIVERA INTRODUCES BILL TO EXPAND MEDICAID COVERAGE TO INCLUDE BLOOD-BASED TESTING FOR ALLERGIES**

*Proposed Legislation Would Improve Access to Allergy Blood Tests in Primary Care Settings To Reduce Health Disparities in Low-Income Communities*

(Albany, NY)- State Senator Gustavo Rivera announced the introduction of a bill (S7450) in the New York State Senate that will require the New York State Medicaid program to cover blood-based allergy testing in addition to skin prick testing. This bill will effectively create further access to critical allergy testing in underserved communities by allowing primary care providers to perform standard blood testing as a way to determine a patient's allergy condition. It will also help align New York State's allergy testing policy with the National Institute of Health's (NIH) asthma and food allergy guidelines. This bill (A9867) was also introduced in the New York State Assembly by Assemblymember Nick Perry on April 20, 2016. It currently stands in the Assembly's Health Committee.

"By including blood-based allergy testing to our State's Medicaid allergy testing coverage we will ensure that Medicaid patients across New York State are granted greater access to affordable allergy testing by simply scheduling a visit to their primary care physician instead of waiting for six months to see a specialist," said State Senator Gustavo Rivera. "This measure will not only provide New York State with significant savings in emergency care, but more importantly it will reduce the health disparities that continue to negatively impact low income and minority communities across our State."

Even though blood-based allergy testing has been proven to be as clinically efficient as skin prick testing, only the latter is currently covered by New York State's Medicaid program. However, skin prick testing is almost exclusively available through allergy specialists, who in turn requires an initial referral from a primary care physician. With only a few hundred allergy specialist across the State, scheduling an appointment can take up to six months for Medicaid patients, delaying a proper diagnoses. Studies have consistently shown that ER visits and hospitalizations related to allergies and asthma can be dramatically reduced when patients receive guidelines-based care.

"Frankly, this is about access to healthcare. It is unfair, it is inappropriate; and it is even outrageous to insist on maintaining rules that deny access to healthcare that has been proven to increase your chances of better health outcomes. Just because you are dependent on Medicaid for your health care coverage should not be the reason that you have to always wait on a long line to get treated. Blood allergy testing is not a medical experiment. It is accepted and proven medical practice that saves patients with asthma and food allergies from long waiting times that is currently required for allergy specialists. Because the Department of Health maintains a deaf ear to our requests, I am pleased and enthusiastic to join my colleagues in this effort to fix this problem legislatively." said Assemblymember Nick Perry.

Private health care insurance already cover blood testing for the diagnosis of allergies. Improving access to allergy blood tests in primary care settings for Medicaid patients will help reduce the health disparities in those suffering asthma and food allergies, which is critical for individuals from underserved populations.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2015-S7450**

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- Introduced
  
- ◦ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
  
- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
  
- ◦ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
  
- Delivered to Governor
  
- Signed By Governor
  
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Requires Medicaid coverage of both blood testing and skin prick testing for allergies

May 03, 2016

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by **Gustavo Rivera**

Do you support this bill?