



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

SERINO'S LYME INSURANCE BILL GAINS TRACTION IN LEGISLATURE

SUSAN SERINO June 14, 2016

| ISSUE: **LYME AND TICK-BORNE DISEASES**

| COMMITTEE: **TASK FORCE ON LYME AND TICK-BORNE DISEASES**



ALBANY, NY—Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) today announced that her bill ([S. 7777](#)) representing the first major step in addressing the issue of providing insurance coverage for those struggling with chronic Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases (TBDs) is gaining traction in the Legislature having picked up an Assembly Majority sponsor. The bill has also been amended since its introduction and the latest version passed unanimously today in the Senate.

“Since being named Chair, my office has been inundated with stories of individuals and families who have been devastated physically, emotionally and financially by Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases,” said Serino. “It is time that the state recognizes the burden that far too many New Yorkers face as a result of a lack of insurance coverage for those struggling to recover from Lyme and TBDs and this bill represents the first major step toward finding a solution that works for both patients and policy holders.”

Currently, health insurance companies are not required to cover long term treatment for those who suffer from chronic Lyme or other related diseases and for many New Yorkers, this can result in thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket costs. Serino, who Chairs the Senate’s Taskforce on Lyme and TBDs, is championing a bill that would require the New York State Health Care Quality and Cost Containment Commission to meet and to submit a report on the potential impact of providing more comprehensive insurance coverage for Lyme and TBDs.

Established in 2007, the Commission was created to analyze the potential impacts of legislative proposals that would expand coverage, including but not limited to, their effects on health insurance costs and quality. While the goal of the Commission is laudable, because the Assembly has failed to appoint its two designated representatives it has yet to meet to fulfill these critical duties.

The bill, which was amended to provide for a more realistic timeline, would require the Commission to meet annually on the first Monday after the first of January to consider this issue and it would statutorily require the Commission to submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature specifically addressing the impact that mandating the coverage of Lyme and TBDs would have on health insurance costs by May 1, 2017.

The bill is now sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblymember Didi Barrett who has partnered with Serino on a package of bills aimed at combating the spread of Lyme and TBDs.

"Lyme and other tick-borne illnesses often do not end with one round of antibiotics; in some cases individuals can develop chronic Lyme and insurance companies are currently not required to cover treatment associated with chronic Lyme," said Assemblymember Didi Barrett. "This bill would begin the discussion to require just that. It is a priority and I will continue to push for its passage."

The bill has been sent to the Assembly.