



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## STATEWIDE RESPONSE TO LYME AND TICK-BORNE DISEASES CRITICAL TO PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH IN NEW YORK

SUSAN SERINO August 31, 2017

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

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



ALBANY, NY—A public hearing convened in Albany by State Senators Sue Serino and Kemp Hannon highlighted the need for an assertive and comprehensive statewide plan to effectively combat the spread of Lyme and tick-borne diseases (TBDs). As Chairs of the Senate’s Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases and the Health Committee, respectively, Serino and Hannon heard testimony from the State Department of Health,

researchers, medical professionals, insurance representatives, patients and advocates, presenting a uniquely holistic view of the complicated and controversial issues surrounding Lyme and TBDs.

*“To find effective solutions, I believe in bringing everyone to the table, and that is what we did at the hearing,” said Senator Serino. “It was made abundantly clear that New York has an urgent tick problem, plain and simple. While the Task Force has laid the groundwork for progress, it is time to take the next critical steps, and that will undoubtedly require a significant budgetary commitment and a coordinated statewide response to stopping the spread. New York has the opportunity to be the leader in the fight against Lyme and tick-borne diseases, and I urge the Executive and our state agencies to partner with us in making these issues a high priority in the coming Legislative Session.”*

*“I commend the Department of Health and Commissioner Zucker for his proactive announcement of a State Action Plan on Lyme and Tick-borne Diseases at the hearing,” said Senator Kemp Hannon. “Holding these hearings prompted the Department to focus and commit more resources to these diseases, which is sorely needed. The Department has already taken action in response to the recent Powassan cases in Saratoga Springs by sending out an advisory to health care providers and testing ticks in the area for the rare tick-borne virus.*

*New York citizens sit in the epicenter of this threat, and thousands suffer from diseases transmitted through tick bites each year. We must and can do more to control the ticks, educate the public and instill best practices for health care providers diagnosing and treating Lyme and tick-borne diseases.”*

The State Senate has worked tirelessly in recent years to draw much-needed attention and resources to the issue of tick-borne illnesses. Created in 2013, the Task Force on Lyme and TBDs released a report within a year setting forth findings and recommendations for swiftly addressing the issue. The Senate has since ensured the inclusion of budgetary funding to draw focus and gather experts in order to advance the fight against ticks and TBDs.

However, yesterday’s hearing—and its various witnesses—made clear that much more is needed from our partners at the State and Federal levels in order to advance research, expand prevention and awareness initiatives, and develop more effective testing and treatment options.

A report and updated recommendations will be developed and released in the coming weeks in response to the day's proceedings.

Witnesses at the hearing included the following:

**Howard A. Zucker, MD, JD,**

Commissioner of NYS Department of Health

**P. Bryon Backenson**

Deputy Director, Bureau of Communicable Disease Control

Center for Community Health, NYS Department of Health

**Dr. Ronald Limberger**

Director, Division of Infectious Disease

Wadsworth Center, NYS Department of Health

**County Department of Health Panel:**

**Andrew Evans,**

Dutchess County Department of Health

**Jean Ralston, RN, MSN,**

Putnam County Department of Health

**Marianne Yourdon, RN,**

Broome County Department of Health

**Steven Bock, MD,**

Hudson Valley Physician

International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society

**Patient Panel:**

**Jill Auerbach,**

Patient, Chair of the Hudson Valley Lyme Disease Association

**Martin Wilson,**

Patient, Long Island

**Audrey Mitchell, (Video)**

Patient, Central New York

**Sunil Sood, MD,**

Chairman of Pediatrics, Southside Hospital, Infectious Diseases Attending, Cohen Children's Medical Center, Professor of Pediatrics and Family Medicine, Hofstra Northwell School of Medicine

Infectious Diseases Society of America

**Craig Hersh, MD,**

Chief Clinical Officer

Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield

**Matthew Frye, Ph.D.**

Community IPM Extension Area Educator

Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

**Stony Brook:**

**Luis Marcos, MD, FACP, MPH,**

Stony Brook University

**Christy Beneri, DO,**

Assistant Professor of Pediatric Infectious Diseases

Stony Brook Children's Hospital

**Susan V. Donelan, MD,**

Attending Physician, Infectious Disease

Stony Brook University Hospital

**Holly Ahern, MS**

Associate Professor of Microbiology,

SUNY Adirondack

**Robert Bransfield, MD, DLFAPA,**

Department of Psychiatry, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Rutgers University.

**Richard Ostfeld, Ph.D.,**

Senior Scientist

Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies

**Christina Fisk,**

President

Lyme Action Network

\*It should be noted that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the federal body charged with determining treatment guidelines and keeping accurate statistics, denied the invitation to attend due to a scheduling conflict for the director. In order for a representative from the organization to attend in the director's stead, eight weeks of prior notice were required for consideration.

Full footage of the public hearing can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.nysenate.gov/calendar/public-hearings/august-29-2017/public-hearing-identify-and-determine-best-practices>