



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

## Sen. Helming Praises Task Force Report on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases

JONATHAN MONFILETTO - 315-568-9816 November 8, 2017



GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming today announced that the Senate Task Force on Lyme and Tick Borne Diseases has released a comprehensive report aimed at combatting the spread of Lyme and tick-borne diseases. The report highlights the immediate need for additional research funding and awareness for Lyme and tick-borne diseases.

The release of the report follows a public hearing held in August and hosted by the Senate Task Force, of which Senator Helming is a member. The hearing included testimony from

experts in the field, medical professionals, insurance industry representatives, patients, and advocates to develop effective solutions to empower patients and prevent New Yorkers from contracting the diseases.

In September, Senator Helming hosted an informational forum on Lyme and tick-borne diseases, where a panel of five experts spoke about how to identify ticks, how to prevent tick bites, and how to seek diagnosis of a tick-borne illness. A common theme that ran throughout the discussions at both the public hearing and the informational forum was the need for better testing methods to detect tick-borne diseases. Many patients reported suffering with symptoms for years before receiving accurate diagnosis and treatment.

“The prevalence of Lyme and tick-borne diseases is a problem that is spreading around the Finger Lakes region and across New York State. When approximately 200 people attended my informational forum, I asked them to raise their hands if they have Lyme or a tick-borne disease or know someone who does, and the majority of the people raised their hands. That shows how important it is that we continue to raise awareness and increase education about Lyme and tick-borne diseases. All of us in state government can use this report as a starting point toward finding solutions to address this complex issue,” Senator Helming said.

To address this point, the report includes a recommendation for the state to create specific protocol when it comes to notifying individuals of their diagnoses. New legislation has been introduced that would require the state to develop that specific protocol to guide providers in properly diagnosing and treating Lyme and tick-borne diseases. This legislation would require them to provide patients with a notification form to better educate them about their test results.

It is commonly accepted that Lyme disease can be effectively treated with antibiotics if

detected early. However, as was discussed at the hearing, the tests used to detect Lyme disease are often not reliable. Current tests do not always find evidence of Lyme disease even if it is present, which results in a false negative test result. The bill would arm patients with the information they need to more effectively advocate for themselves and receive swift, effective treatment.

Additionally, the Task Force recommends the following:

- Creation of a Statewide Action Plan and new Lyme and tick-borne diseases research funding;
- Promote testing in children who present with tick-borne disease symptoms to ensure swift treatment and avoid the long-term consequences of misdiagnosis;
- More effectively utilize technology and social media to increase awareness about the dangers of Lyme and tick-borne diseases; and
- Actively pursue private and federal funding to drive critical research.

“The need to provide the most accurate, reliable information regarding Lyme and tick-borne diseases in order to combat this crisis is something that we can all agree on. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate to support this important legislation that will help patients suffering from these diseases and their families,” Senator Helming said.

*Senator Helming represents the 54<sup>th</sup> Senate District, which consists of Seneca and Wayne Counties, parts of Cayuga and Ontario Counties, and the towns of Lansing and Webster. For more information, please visit Senator Helming’s [website](#), or follow @SenatorHelming on Facebook or Twitter.*

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