



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

## Senator Lanza Joins Governor Cuomo to Announce Statewide Cancer Research Initiative to Enhance Prevention Efforts and Improve Access to Diagnostic Treatment Across New York

ANDREW J. LANZA November 16, 2017

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*I am humbled by the strength and courage of those currently battling cancer and for all the survivors who work tirelessly to raise awareness and provide support to those still struggling. Thank you Governor Cuomo for listening to the concerns of our residents and for taking action and directing that these studies be conducted to keep New Yorkers healthy and safe. By working with our regional health experts and institutions, we will better understand what we're up against, how to fight it, and what we need to do to ensure our children remain healthy years from now. By taking action today, we will ensure a better tomorrow for the next generation of Staten Islanders." Senator Lanza*

## **Cancer is Now 2nd Leading Cause of Death in New York and Across the United States**

### **DOH to Conduct Four Regional Analyses in Areas of New York with Higher Incidence of Cancer**

### **New Studies Will Examine Patterns, Trends and Potential Causes Contributing to Cancer Incidence**

### **Initiative Builds on Actions to Connect New Yorkers with Diagnostic Services and Treatment**

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced a new data-driven, statewide initiative to examine cancer patterns and the potential causes of cancer in four regions across the state that have a higher incidence of certain cancers. Governor Cuomo traveled to Warren County and Staten Island to announce that the Department of Health will be reviewing cancer data, potential demographic and occupational factors, and will consult with the Department of Environmental Conservation on environmental factors contributing to these clusters of cancer incidences. The regional studies will focus on the eastern part of the state surrounding Warren County, western part of the state surrounding Erie Country, and in two regions downstate, including Staten Island and Long Island. Warren County has the highest rate of cancer in the state, while Staten Island's rate is an anomaly compared to the rest of the boroughs in New York City.

These regional clusters were identified using the New York State Cancer Registry which is one of the most comprehensive in the United States and maintains over 50 years of data. The registry is Gold Certified by the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries for its completeness and accuracy. The Registry collects reports on cancer diagnoses from health care providers which include the anatomical sites of tumors, the stages at diagnosis, the cell types of the cancer, as well as the treatment information and demographic information of

those diagnosed with cancer.

"A cancer diagnosis is the last thing anyone wants to hear from their doctor, and in order for New York to continue providing the very best care to help stomp out this deadly disease, we need to invest in necessary research and development to improve the way provide care," Governor Cuomo said. "The ongoing battle against cancer is a global challenge that will only be addressed by bringing top-notch medical experts and institutions together to find a solution. This investment and statewide study will open doors to new developments and shine light on what New Yorkers can do to improve the health and well-being of themselves and their families, as we continue to work toward a stronger, healthier New York for all."

This new comprehensive effort will help identify the central causes leading to higher cancer rates in certain regions and ultimately help develop the most effective programs to prevent and treat cancer. The state is budgeting up to \$500,000 to conduct the four regional studies, and findings are expected within one year.

As part of the review, the Department of Health will look within and around counties that have higher rates of cancer and work to detect patterns related to demographic, socioeconomic, behavioral, or occupational factors. In addition, the Department of Environmental Conservation will inventory potential environmental threats in those communities. The agencies will collaborate on further evaluation, mapping, and data mining. DOH will use the results of this initiative to enhance community screening and prevention efforts and support access to appropriate high-quality health care services in communities across the state identified as having high rates of cancer.

All New York communities have been impacted by cancer and the state has worked to ensure access to early intervention, cancer screening, and treatment programs. As part of this new initiative, DOH will work with the identified communities to connect them with

these critical services. The state funds a multitude of programs aimed at preventing, identifying and treating cancer. Through the New York Cancer Services Program, the state funds breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screenings and diagnostic services to uninsured and underinsured New Yorkers, which served over 25,000 New Yorkers in the 2016 fiscal year.

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New York State Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker said, "More than one million New Yorkers are living with a current or former cancer diagnosis and millions more have lost a loved one to this devastating disease. These are sobering facts and exactly why Governor Cuomo is pursuing expansive actions to prevent, detect, and successfully treat cancer. These actions will help communities across New York better understand cancer and connect residents with critical services that save lives."

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos said, "Protecting the health of New Yorkers is a top priority for the state, and through Governor Cuomo's leadership, we are making strong investments in improving water and air quality and addressing sources of pollution in the state. By closely examining the environmental factors contributing to a higher incidence of cancer in specific regions across the state, we can better inform prevention efforts across New York. I applaud the Governor for his leadership on this critical issue and look forward to working with DOH and all stakeholders as we work quickly on this initiative."

While the number of cancer diagnoses per year in New York have been rising, deaths due to the most common types of cancer, including lung, prostate, female breast and colorectal cancers, have been steadily decreasing. Increased access to cancer screenings leading to early

detection and treatment means more diagnoses and fewer deaths.

For additional data and information on cancer in New York State, visit: [www.health.ny.gov/statistics/cancer/registry/pdf/snapshot.pdf](http://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/cancer/registry/pdf/snapshot.pdf).

DOH also supports communities through a number of public health programs focused on cancer risk factors, such as obesity and lack of physical activity. The comprehensive Tobacco Control Program is part of the agency's mission to eliminate the number one preventable cause of death and disease in New York, which is associated with 30 percent of cancer mortality and 85 percent of all lung cancer deaths. This program educates communities through targeted media campaigns, works with health systems to increase the use of tobacco cessation treatments, and helps municipalities find solutions aimed at creating a tobacco free norm. As a result of these efforts, New York State youth smoking rates are down to a record low 4.3 percent, the lowest rate in the nation.

Senator Andrew Lanza said, "I am humbled by the strength and courage of those currently battling cancer and for all the survivors who work tirelessly to raise awareness and provide support to those still struggling. Thank you Governor Cuomo for listening to the concerns of our residents and for taking action and directing that these studies be conducted to keep New Yorkers healthy and safe. By working with our regional health experts and institutions, we will better understand what we're up against, how to fight it, and what we need to do to ensure our children remain healthy years from now. By taking action today, we will ensure a better tomorrow for the next generation of Staten Islanders."

Assemblyman Michael Cusick said, "Too many of us know someone - a brother or sister, parent or close friend - who has been diagnosed with cancer. With Staten Island experiencing some of the highest rates of cancer in New York City, the Governor's commitment to study this deadly disease to better inform treatment and prevention efforts

is a major step forward. We need to better examine the root of the problem if we are to beat it and that is exactly what the state is doing by stepping up and getting this analysis done."

Assemblyman Ron Castorina said, "New York is a national leader in protecting the health and well-being of our residents, and with the Governor's commitment to launch studies that will help us improve the way we screen for and treat cancers, we are continuing our fight to provide a better future for our children. I commend Governor Cuomo for investing in this research and look forward to supporting our medical experts and institutions as we build a foundation for a stronger New York for generations to come."

Staten Island Borough President James S. Oddo said, "We all know friends or loved ones who have been affected by various forms of cancer, some of them rare forms of the disease. And we know the statistics that show that Staten Island has higher rates of cancer than many other places. This study will help explain some of the disturbing trends and patterns and, most importantly, help us develop a blueprint for action. Thank you to Governor Cuomo for putting State resources into the health and safety of Staten Islanders."

JCC of Staten Island Executive Director David Sorkin said, "Cancer rates on Staten Island are the highest in New York City, and we also have the highest smoking prevalence in the city at 17.4% which is significantly higher than the statewide level. The evidence shows that New York State's comprehensive tobacco control program is effective in reducing these alarming rates, and ensuring that the next generation is not subjected to similar burdens of tobacco-related disease and death. The new statewide initiative by Governor Cuomo is a great step in continuing to prioritize the health of New Yorkers and reducing cancer-related health disparities across the city."

"Receiving a cancer diagnosis can be devastating for a patient and their families," said Julie Hart, New York government relations director for the American Cancer Society Cancer

Action Network. "We applaud the Governor for this important initiative and look forward to working with him to bring additional attention to the problems of high cancer incidence rates and the importance of cancer screenings."

"We applaud Governor Cuomo for taking this important step to fight cancer and look forward to New York continuing its strong leadership in reducing tobacco use," said Kevin O'Flaherty, Northeast Regional Director for the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. "Smoking causes one out of every three cancer deaths and nearly 90 percent of deaths from lung cancer. To win the fight against cancer, New York must continue to implement proven strategies to prevent kids from accessing and using tobacco and help current smokers quit."