



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## STATE SENATE BUDGET RESOLUTION INCLUDES UNPRECEDENTED FUNDING FOR LYME AND TICK-BORNE DISEASES

SUSAN SERINO March 15, 2018

| ISSUE: **LYME AND TICK-BORNE DISEASES, NYS BUDGET**

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



ALBANY, NY - Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I - Hyde Park) today announced that the State Senate One-House Budget Resolution includes a significant appropriation of \$1.2 million to combat Lyme and tick-borne diseases (TBDs) in the state.

“With headlines across the state detailing the devastating impact of Lyme and tick-borne diseases, now is the time for New York to lead by investing a coordinated statewide response aimed at combatting their spread and protecting residents,” said Senator Sue Serino.

“Once again, the NYS Senate has stepped up to the plate, and doubled down on their commitment to making this issue a priority. I urge the Governor and my colleagues in the Assembly to join us in this fight by including this funding in the final enacted budget.”

Senator Kemp Hannon, Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Health, said, “Too many people continue to suffer the effects of tick-borne illnesses, demonstrating a need for further action. The Senate has led the way in providing funding for Lyme and other tick-borne diseases in New York State, and this year, our proposal more than doubles last year's commitment. I commend Senator Serino, Chair of the Senate's Task Force, and her efforts to bring much needed awareness to this issue.”

Senator Serino joined with Senator Kemp Hannon last year to convene a public hearing on the topic that highlighted the need for a coordinated statewide response.

At that time, the State Department of Health announced a series of initiatives aimed at enhancing and expanding its tick surveillance and education efforts to better protect New Yorkers. However, despite multiple calls to fund these initiatives, as well as prevention efforts and research, the Governor's Executive Budget Proposal cut last year's funding for Lyme and TBDs and failed to include any funding to directly address the issue.

“Unfortunately, in our community, it feels as though everyone knows someone who has experienced the devastating impacts of Lyme and TBDs,” Senator Serino continued.

“However, with cases of TBDs—including the particularly alarming, and proven deadly Powassan virus—on the rise across the state, the reality is that this is no longer just a

Hudson Valley or Long Island problem. We need to be proactive in coordinating our efforts to effectively safeguard New Yorkers and empower those who have suffered with these diseases. We cannot afford to turn a blind eye to this problem.”

Additionally, the Senate Budget Resolution advances language modeled after legislation carried by Senator Serino that would represent the first major step toward addressing the lack of insurance coverage available to those diagnosed with Lyme and TBDs. Currently, health insurance companies are not required to cover long-term treatment for chronic Lyme or other related diseases, which is devastating for many New Yorkers. People suffering from chronic Lyme disease can experience extreme fatigue, nausea, depression, joint pain and many other symptoms.

If included in the final enacted budget, the State Health Care Quality and Cost Containment Commission would be required to meet and submit a report on any potential impact that providing this more comprehensive coverage would have on the quality of services provided or the cost to New Yorkers. The inclusion of this language in the Senate’s budget proposal for the first time signals a desire to swiftly address this critical issue.

A final budget proposal is expected to be acted on by April 1, 2018.