



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

## Seward Calls for Study of Link Between Lyme & Mental Health

JEFF BISHOP, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR March 29, 2018

| ISSUE: **LYME DISEASE TASK FORCE, LYME AND TICK-BORNE DISEASES, MENTAL HEALTH**



**ALBANY, 03/29/18** — State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I/Ref-Oneonta) joined this week with his senate colleagues to call on the state to investigate the impact Lyme and tick-borne diseases (TBD) may have on mental health. The senate unanimously passed [legislation \(S.7171\)](#) co-sponsored by Senator Seward that would require the state to study the link between infectious diseases, blood-borne pathogens and mental illnesses. The bill is the first step in a process that could lead to a better understanding of the incredible impact these diseases can have on the overall health of New Yorkers.

**“The Senate Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases has performed groundbreaking work and helped focus the spotlight on tick-borne illnesses,”** said Senator Seward. **“We know more today than ever before about these debilitating ailments and are making strides in prevention and treatment. Studying Lyme in relation to mental health is a logical step forward that can lead to improved diagnosis and treatment plans that can improve patient outcomes in the short- and long-term.”**

In August of 2017, Senator Sue Serino, chairman of the Senate’s Task Force on Lyme and TBDs and Senator Kemp Hannon, chairman of the Senate Health Committee, held a comprehensive public hearing to look critically at the state’s response to the Lyme and TBD epidemic. It was there that testimony was given by patients, public health experts and mental health professionals that indicated that psychiatric symptoms related to Lyme and TBDs could directly impact quality of life and long-term health of patients if not properly addressed. Patients described battles with mood disorders, anxiety, depression and other mental health related issues. However, witnesses also testified that because health care providers and advocates may not immediately connect mental health issues with the emergence of these diseases, too often these symptoms go unchecked or are ultimately attributed to other causes leading to ineffective treatment and stigmatization.

The bill passed this week by the senate would require the Office of Mental Hygiene, in conjunction with the Department of Health, to conduct an impact study to consider how infectious diseases and blood-borne pathogens like Lyme and TBDs, may correlate with mental health issues in infected individuals. The bill would require the study to be submitted by October 1, 2019.

The bill has been sent to the assembly where it is sponsored by Assemblymember Aileen Gunther, who chairs the Assembly Mental Health Committee.

Senator Seward, a member of the Senate Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases (TBDs), also co-sponsors [legislation \(S.6926\)](#) to create specific protocol to notify individuals of

their diagnoses related to Lyme and other TBDs. The senate bill would require the commissioner of health to work with health care providers to develop a standard protocol and patient notification for the diagnosis and treatment of Lyme and TBDs.

**“In discussing this issue with individuals who have contracted Lyme and doctors alike, it is clear that diagnosis and treatment plans vary greatly. We need to develop a uniform health care strategy that will increase positive outcomes so people aren’t left guessing if they are infected or if they will be left to struggle with a debilitating disease for the rest of their lives,”** Seward added.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2017-S7171**

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- Introduced
  
- ○ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
  
- ○ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
  
- ○ Passed Assembly

- Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Relates to impact studies on tick-borne diseases

December 21, 2017

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by [Susan Serino](#)

Do you support this bill?

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## 2017-S6926

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- Introduced
  - ◦ In Committee Assembly
    - In Committee Senate
  - ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
    - On Floor Calendar Senate
  - ◦ Passed Assembly
    - Passed Senate
-

- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Directs the commissioner of health to establish protocols for the diagnosis and treatment of Lyme disease and other tick borne diseases

October 20, 2017

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by **Kemp Hannon**

Do you support this bill?