



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## SERINO AND ROSENTHAL PUSH TO EMPOWER WOMEN THROUGH ENDOMETRIOSIS EDUCATION

SUSAN SERINO May 18, 2018



ALBANY, NY—Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) and Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal (D/WF—Manhattan), the bill sponsors responsible for successfully repealing the infamous ‘Tampon Tax,’ have teamed up again to help educate school-aged young women about their menstrual health. The two have recently introduced legislation that directs the state to develop age-appropriate materials to educate young women in schools about menstrual disorders, including endometriosis, that may impact their overall health.

**Senator Sue Serino**, *“Too many young women are experiencing the devastating side effects of endometriosis and other menstrual disorders month after month, and are suffering in silence because they simply have not been made aware of how to effectively address them. We hear from women all of the time who have missed work, can’t participate in sports, or those whose school work has suffered as a direct result of a menstrual disorder that was not properly addressed. It is time to put an end to that. This bill will provide young women with critically important information that has the potential to significantly improve their overall health and I encourage my colleagues in both houses to make it a priority this legislative session.”*

*“Discussions around menstruation sadly remain taboo in much of mainstream society. The culture of silence on women’s health often prevents young girls from seeking information about their bodies and from learning more about menstrual disorders they might be able to address,” said Assemblymember **Linda B. Rosenthal**. “We must empower young women with information about their basic biology so they can control their bodies and protect their health. Even after toppling the decades-old tampon tax that taxed girls and women on their own biology, we must continue forcing the conversation on menstrual equity.”*

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, over 6 million American women suffer from endometriosis, an often painful disorder that impacts women’s reproductive organs. For many who live with the condition, the pelvic and lower back pain often associated with it can be debilitating to the point in which they can no longer partake in their normal day-to-day activities. As a result, many young women miss school and work, and dealing with the symptoms can lead to chronic pain, physical and emotional distress, and can be academically, professionally, and financially devastating.

While this is a common menstrual condition, many young women simply are not aware of it, which is why many women with endometriosis typically suffer from it for 10 or more years before being correctly diagnosed. Additionally, endometriosis is the only known precursor to ovarian cancer, a cancer known as the ‘silent killer’ because it often goes undetected until the latter stages and is considered one of the most deadly cancers in women.

Early intervention is key when it comes to effectively addressing endometriosis. Left untreated, the disorder can also cause infertility. In fact, researchers have noted that as many as half of women who suffer from infertility are affected by endometriosis.

The bill's sponsors were made aware of the issue after meeting with representatives of the Endometriosis Foundation of America who developed the ENPOWR (**E**ndometriosis: **P**romoting **O**utreach and **W**ide **R**ecognition) Program, a community-based endometriosis program that promotes awareness and encourages young women to seek treatment.

**Tamer Seckin, MD, Founder of the Endometriosis Foundation of America (EndoFound) said,**  
*"Students of the ENPOWR Project have shown a keen understanding of endometriosis and the importance of raising awareness about the disease. Bringing endometriosis education to New York State's students is a vital step in reducing a delay in diagnosis and overcoming stigmas associated with menstruation. The sooner one understands that pain with their period is not normal, the sooner they can seek treatment and work with a specialist to help prevent more serious issues from affecting their wellbeing in the long-term. Everyone deserves the opportunity to thrive, those living with endometriosis are no exception."*

The bill (S. 8543/A. 10763) aims to model this approach by requiring the Commissioners of Health and Education to develop age-appropriate educational materials for endometriosis, and other menstrual disorders, to be made available to school districts and health care practitioners.

The goal of the bill is to raise awareness about these conditions to ensure that young women have the information they need to effectively advocate for their personal health. Given the seriousness of this disease, and the stigma often associated with discussing menstrual health, it is critical that the state makes an effort to educate young women on this important issue.

The bill has been referred to the Committees on Health in their respective houses.