



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## BILL TO EMPOWER WOMEN THROUGH MENSTRUAL HEALTH EDUCATION PASSES LEGISLATURE UNANIMOUSLY

SUSAN SERINO June 19, 2019

ALBANY, NY—A bi-partisan group of lawmakers today announced that their bill to give young women the tools they need to better advocate for their menstrual health has passed both houses of the Legislature unanimously. With infertility awareness on the rise, the bill (S. 6368/A. 484), sponsored by Senators Monica R. Martinez, Sue Serino and Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal, aims to provide women with access to important educational resources regarding various menstrual disorders earlier in their lives so that they can take steps to more effectively protect their overall health.

Senator Monica R. Martinez said, “In the United States, it is estimated that approximately 1 out of every 10 women suffer from endometriosis. While this is not an uncommon condition, many people are completely unaware of the disease, and the lack of awareness often results in a patient’s prolonged suffering and misdiagnosis. The symptoms of this condition can cause serious pain that often disrupts a woman’s social, mental, and professional life. This legislation will help promote conversations regarding these issues and ensure that young women have the education they need in order to take proactive steps to positive menstrual health. I want to thank Senator Sue Serino and Assemblymember Rosenthal for their advocacy and dedication for bringing attention to this critical health concern.”

Senator Sue Serino said, "Since introducing this legislation, I have heard from countless women who spent years suffering in silence while unknowingly dealing with the devastating side effects of endometriosis and other menstrual disorders month after month. By providing young women with critically important resources that will empower them to seek help sooner, this bill has the potential to help reverse the statistics that make endometriosis the leading cause of infertility among women. I thank Senator Martinez and Assemblymember Rosenthal, for joining us in this fight and I encourage the Governor to sign this important legislation into law as soon as possible."

"As a result of the stigma that continues to shroud periods, millions of menstruators needlessly suffer in silence for years with un-diagnosed menstrual disorders. Information is power, and this legislation will help empower young menstruators to understand their bodies and demand treatment. It will also help to smash the stigma by fostering discussion in the classroom," said Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal (D/WF- Manhattan). "We cannot break down barriers if we do not talk about menstruation and menstrual disorders, and passage of this legislation into law will help push the conversation around periods to the fore in schools statewide," she said.

According to the Endometriosis Foundation of America, 7 million women throughout the United States suffer from endometriosis, a painful disorder that directly impacts women's reproductive organs. Many living with endometriosis often experience pelvic and lower back pain that can be so debilitating it makes partaking in normal day-to-day activities nearly impossible. As a result, many young women miss school, extracurricular activities and work each month, and dealing with the symptoms can lead to additional problems like chronic pain as well as physical and emotional distress.

Left untreated, endometriosis can also cause infertility and lead directly to hysterectomies. Researchers note that as many as half of women who suffer from infertility are affected by

endometriosis.

Despite the high rate of women suffering from endometriosis, many young women are not aware of its existence, which is why the Endometriosis Foundation of America argues that women typically suffer its side effects for 10 or more years before being properly diagnosed. Endometriosis is also the only known precursor to ovarian cancer, a cancer labeled the 'silent killer' because it often goes undetected until it is in the latter stages.

Early intervention is key when it comes to combatting these statistics and effectively addressing endometriosis and other menstrual disorders. The bill aims to bolster this effort by expressly requiring the Commissioners of Health and Education to develop age-appropriate educational materials to be made available to school districts and health care practitioners to ensure that young women have the information they need to effectively advocate for their health.

Since the bill's introduction last year, a public awareness campaign, #LetsTalkPeriod, was launched in order to encourage passage of the bill and a change.org petition was also started in support of the bill and has since garnered over 14,000 signatures. New Yorkers who wish to add their names to the petition can do so by clicking [here](#).

The Endometriosis Foundation of America has played an active role in raising awareness for this disorder and in helping to inspire and garner support for the bill.

"I applaud New York State for being the first to pass legislation vital to educating young women about endometriosis at the age of disease onset - with the first period. Bringing endometriosis education to New York State's students is a critical step in reducing a delay in diagnosis and overcoming stigmas associated with menstruation. No longer should talk about a woman's period be taboo. Young women, in particular, need to know that painful

periods are not normal and that there is help. Everyone deserves the opportunity to thrive; those living with endometriosis are no exception," said Tamer Seckin, MD, co-founder of the Endometriosis Foundation of America (EndoFoud.org).

The bill has also caught the attention of celebrities who have long advocated for endometriosis awareness like Padma Lakshmi, host of "Top Chef" and co-founder of The Endometriosis Foundation of America (EndoFound) who said, "Educational resources that will be provided with this funding are integral to ensuring a healthy future for our children. All teenage girls and boys should learn about periods and the symptoms of endometriosis since ten percent of females suffer from it. If I had known in high school, I could have saved myself so much pain and isolation. It would have been such a game changer."

"I'm encouraged that women's reproductive health is getting the attention it deserves - finally! This is a big step forward to educate our young people about their bodies. Hopefully, other states will follow New York's passing of this bill, and make menstrual health disorders like endometriosis awareness part of their curriculums. Today was a win for all women." said Diana Falzone, Journalist and Women's Health Advocate who recently submitted an op-ed in Buzzfeed in support of the bill.

For more information and important resources for those dealing with endometriosis and other menstrual disorders, visit [endofound.org](http://endofound.org).

The bill passed in the Assembly on May 20, 2019 and will now be sent to the Governor for review before it can be signed into law.

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The Endometriosis Foundation of America (EndoFound) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that strives to increase disease recognition, provide advocacy, facilitate expert surgical

training, and fund landmark endometriosis research. Engaged in a robust campaign to inform both the medical community and the public, the EndoFound places particular emphasis on the critical importance of early diagnosis and effective intervention while simultaneously providing education to the next generation of medical professionals and their patients.