NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

BILL TO EMPOWER WOMEN THROUGH MENSTRUAL HEALTH EDUCATION SIGNED INTO LAW

SUSAN SERINO November 26, 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 been signed into law. 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.

“I am proud to have sponsored this legislation, and I am hopeful this will promote conversations regarding these issues and empower young women with the education they need in order to take proactive steps to positive menstrual health,” ***said NYS Senator Monica R. Martinez****. “Many women are unaware of endometriosis, and the lack of awareness often results in the patient’s prolonged suffering and misdiagnosis. I want to thank Senator Sue Serino and Assemblymember Rosenthal for their partnership and long endured fight to bring this important issue to light.”*

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 menstrual disorders like endometriosis. This new law has the potential to help reverse the statistics that make endometriosis the leading cause of infertility among women by giving them the tools they need to seek help sooner. This legislation can truly be life changing for so many women and I am grateful to my partners in the legislature, Senator Monica Martinez and Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal, for helping to get this bill over the finish line, and I thank the Governor for recognizing the importance of this legislation and signing it into law.”*

“As a result of the stigma that continues to shroud periods, millions needlessly suffer in silence for years with undiagnosed menstrual disorders. Information is power, and this legislation will help empower young people 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 signing this new 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 access to the information they need to effectively advocate for their health.

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.

Tamer Seckin, M.D., Founder, Endometriosis Foundation of America (EndoFound.org), said, *"This is a revolutionary bill for women's healthcare. With education, we can work against the stigma that continues to surround women's reproductive health. We can call the physical and emotional debilitation, which was historically, and incorrectly, deemed 'hysteria,' by its real name: endometriosis. Endometriosis is a major cause of anxiety and depression for women who are not understood, believed, or trusted when they speak about their pain. Not listening to a person who is in pain is a deep injustice, but with awareness and education, this can—and will—change. Thank you, Senator Sue Serino and Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal, for introducing this landmark bill in 2018 and thank you, Senator Monica Martinez, for taking up the charge in 2019. With awareness comes early diagnosis, which is the first step towards treatment. Your dedication to this cause will have an unparalleled impact on endometriosis patients and help them get the treatment they deserve. I am certain that this bill will change the course of women's history."*

Margaret Cianci, Executive Director, Endometriosis Foundation of America (EndoFound.org), said

, "We are proud to be a part of this historic event - and our goal is to advocate for similar legislation in the other 49 states so that young girls (and boys) can recognize the disease earlier, and get the treatment they need earlier, without being misdiagnosed, misunderstood and mistreated for years."

"Today, women with endometriosis can celebrate a monumental step towards progress! Thank you, Governor Cuomo, for recognizing the importance of early education of signs and symptoms of endometriosis. This law will help young women from suffering in silence longer than they must. Now they can be empowered with the knowledge so they can advocate for themselves, and seek proper treatment as soon as possible," said ***Diana Falzone***, a prominent journalist who in fighting for the passage of this legislation shared her own story of living with endometriosis in an Oped for Buzzfeed earlier this year.

The bill passed both houses of the legislature unanimously.

For more information and important resources for those dealing with endometriosis and other menstrual disorders, visit endofound.org.

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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.