



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Peter Oberacker

Senator Oberacker Helps Put Spotlight on Lyme and TBDs

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ALBANY – 03/02/21 – Senator Peter Oberacker (R/C-Schenevus) today joined fellow legislators to put a spotlight on Lyme and tick-borne diseases. Those involved in the virtual press conference called for state funds to invest in research, education and prevention initiatives. The coalition is asking the state to commit at least \$1.5 million to the cause in the final enacted state budget.

Senator Peter Oberacker, a member of the Senate Health Committee, said, **“We know more today than ever before about Lyme and other tick-borne diseases (TBDs). As these debilitating**

ailments spread to new parts of the state, it is vital that we continue to move forward with education, prevention, and treatment efforts. New York is at a critical juncture and absent state funding, the progress we have made is at stake. We need to intensify our efforts - helping individuals who suffer from Lyme while stopping new cases before they start. I commended Senator Serino for her ongoing efforts and stand with her in calling for the resources necessary to support the fight against Lyme.”

Senator Sue Serino, a long time advocate for programs preventing the spread of Lyme and TBDs, is spearheading the effort. Serino pointed to the fact that after years of fighting for acknowledgement, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recently updated its reporting measures and now estimates that approximately 476,000 Americans are diagnosed and treated for Lyme disease each year, a significant increase from their previous estimate of approximately 300,000. Serino argues that with New Yorkers spending even more time outdoors, and with Lyme and TBDs often resulting in symptoms similar to COVID-19, now is not the time for the state to go backwards in its fight.

Despite widespread bi-partisan support for efforts aimed at tackling ticks, over the past two years, funding for Lyme and tick-borne diseases has been substantially reduced. In 2018, Senator Serino was successful in securing an unprecedented \$1 million Legislative add in the final State Budget to help support research, education and prevention initiatives. In both 2019 and 2020, funding for these programs was reduced to only \$250,000. This year, the Governor’s Executive Budget Proposal even eliminates the small \$69,400 allotment that is typically included “for services and expenses of research and prevention, and detection of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses.”

Following the press conference, event participants had the opportunity to hear from patient advocates and researchers who provided an update on projects that have been funded in part through past state budgets and painted a picture of the status of Lyme and TBDs in the state today. With many new Legislators elected to both the Senate and Assembly, the event

served as an opportunity for lawmakers and their staff to hear first-hand about the innovative work being done all across New York and why it is critically important for the state not to undo the progress it has made in combating Lyme and TBDs.