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MENTAL HEALTH &  
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

THE SENATE  
STATE OF NEW YORK



**SUSAN SERINO**  
Senator, 41<sup>ST</sup> District

**ALBANY OFFICE:**  
ROOM 812  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247  
(518) 455-2945  
**DISTRICT OFFICE:**  
4254 ALBANY POST ROAD  
HYDE PARK, NEW YORK 12538  
**PUTNAM OFFICE:**  
117 TOWN PARK LANE  
PUTNAM VALLEY, NEW YORK 10579

October 5, 2016

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Re: Funding to Combat Lyme & Tick-Borne Diseases

Dear Governor Cuomo:

First I would like to commend you on your support and commitment to combating Lyme and tick-borne diseases (TBDs) here in New York State. Signing S.5803-A/A.8106-A and S.5804-A/A.8105-A was a crucial step in the fight against these diseases, ensuring New Yorkers across the state have the information they need to reduce their risks of exposure.

Candidly though, we must do much more. Zika has grabbed the headlines as a new mosquito borne virus—and we have to understand, prevent and treat it in New York. West Nile Virus has been recently diagnosed in a few individuals and animals, and presents a continuing challenge to our citizens. But these are challenges the state has met head-on, dedicating funding, increasing public awareness and ensuring that research and tracking is done to appropriately prevent these diseases from becoming epidemics.

But, Lyme disease is an epidemic right now. We must ensure we are meeting it head-on as we would any epidemic in our state, which means the state must also immediately commit substantially more funding to fight Lyme and ensure those already afflicted appropriately and expeditiously receive treatment.

I have seen first-hand just how powerful a commitment by the state to combat these diseases can be. As you may know, last year, \$90,000 in state funding went to the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies—a leader in Lyme Disease study—to advance their research. Shortly after, and in large part due to the state's investment in the issue, a private foundation committed \$5 million to help the Cary Institute conduct a large-scale study in the region that will undoubtedly provide invaluable information to help us better understand how we can stop the spread of tick-borne diseases. It is clear that there is a grave need to bolster this kind of critical research, and New York has an opportunity to play a significant role in the fight against Lyme and TBDs.



As Chair of the Senate's Task Force on Lyme and TBDs, I am proud of the commitment we have made as a state to tackle Lyme and TBDs, including the \$600,000 devoted to education, prevention and research included in the New York State Budget each of the past two years. However, and I cannot stress this enough, Lyme is an epidemic that we must address now.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), New York State had the third highest total of confirmed cases of Lyme disease in 2014, behind only our neighbors Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

We need to build on our experience by researching the long term effects and long term treatment of Lyme, by ensuring physicians have the tools—including a reliable test for Lyme—and the knowledge to quickly and efficiently diagnose all TBDs.

As elected officials, it is our responsibility to ensure the health and well-being of New Yorkers and their families. We need to let them know that this is an issue we will continue to take seriously not only with our words, but with our resources as well. Given how disproportionately these diseases affect the residents of our state, I hope that you will take this opportunity as you are crafting your budget proposal for next year to stop the spread of tick-borne diseases that have already devastated far too many New York families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sue Serino".

Sue Serino  
New York State Senator  
41<sup>st</sup> District

CC:  
Senator John J. Flanagan, Senate Majority Leader  
Senator Catharine M. Young, Senate Finance Committee, Chair