



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William T. Stachowski

Senator Stachowski Calls for Measure to Proclaim May as Celiac Disease Awareness Month

WILLIAM T. STACHOWSKI April 27, 2010

| ISSUE: **HEALTH**

4/27/10

SENATOR STACHOWSKI CALLS FOR MEASURE TO PROCLAIM MAY AS CELIAC DISEASE AWARENESS MONTH

In an effort to increase awareness of Celiac Disease and recognize those dedicated to fighting it, Senator William T. Stachowski (D, Lake View), together with several of his colleagues, today called upon Governor David Paterson to proclaim May 2010 as Celiac Disease Awareness Month.

Celiac Disease, an inherited, autoimmune disease which hinders the ability to absorb nutrients properly, causes damage to the lining of the small intestine from eating gluten and other proteins found in wheat, barley, rye and possibly oats. The exact cause is unknown, however, those with a family member with Celiac Disease are at greater risk for developing the disease.

“Experts in the field of Celiac Disease tell us that one percent of the population worldwide has Celiac Disease, but sadly, 97% of those individuals go undiagnosed,” said Senator

Stachowski. "In the U.S., this means that as many as three million people, including nearly 133,000 in New York State, are afflicted with Celiac Disease and may not even know it. In addition, there seems to be the same lack of awareness among the medical community and as a result, there is a real need for information and services for people who are suffering with the effects of this disease. By dedicating a statewide month of commemoration about this serious condition that affects so many families, we hope to help increase awareness about Celiac Disease and educate those individuals who might be at greatest risk for this illness."

There are numerous diseases and conditions associated with Celiac Disease including: anemia, autoimmune disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis and systemic lupus erythematosus, certain types of intestinal cancer, dermatitis herpetiformis, Down Syndrome, lactose intolerance, miscarriage or unexplained infertility, certain neurological conditions, osteoporosis or osteopenia, thyroid disease and Type 1 diabetes.

Celiac Disease is often misdiagnosed, or only diagnosed after years of suffering, missed work, and expensive diagnostic testing-and ineffective treatment. "The average cost of an undiagnosed case is between \$5,000 - \$12,000," said Senator Stachowski. "Consequently, Celiac Disease is costing New Yorkers an estimated \$725 million annually in unnecessary medical bills. This is why raising awareness among medical professionals and the public about the disease could save the State of New York hundreds of millions of dollars in medical care and in lost work productivity."

The measure calling upon Governor Paterson to proclaim May 2010 as Celiac Disease Awareness Month was passed by the full Senate today.