



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Bonacic

## Senator Bonacic Announces Senate Passage of Legislation to Expand Access to Vaccines

JOHN J. BONACIC June 28, 2012

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### **Legislation Would Add Shingles Vaccine to the List of Vaccinations Pharmacists are Permitted to Administer**

Senator John J. Bonacic (R, C, I--Mount Hope) announced that the New York State Senate passed legislation that would give New York State residents greater access to the shingles vaccine.

The legislation, S3808B, would add the shingles vaccine to the list of immunizations that trained licensed pharmacists are permitted to administer to adults, when ordered by a patient's physician or nurse practitioner.

“The shingles vaccine can help prevent a very painful and dangerous disease, but it is often hard to obtain because many physicians do not carry it,” said Senator Bonacic. “Allowing trained pharmacists to administer the shingles vaccine will make the vaccine far more accessible and help prevent many residents from being afflicted with this disease.”

Under a 2008 law, licensed pharmacists are permitted to administer flu and pneumonia vaccines to adults. Over 7,500 pharmacists have been certified to administer immunizations by the State Education Department since the law's inception, according to the Pharmacists Society of the State of New York.

Allowing trained pharmacists to administer the shingles vaccine would significantly expand access to the vaccine. The shingles vaccine is a pharmacy benefit covered under Medicare Part D, meaning physicians cannot be reimbursed for it. The vaccine must also be kept frozen and used within thirty minutes after it has thawed. Consequently, many physicians offices do not have the vaccine on hand, making it harder for residents to access it.

Shingles is a viral disease characterized by a painful skin rash with blisters. Along with being severely painful, shingles can be potentially debilitating, causing eye damage and vision loss if it develops on the face. In some cases, shingles can cause nerve damage which results in prolonged periods of pain lasting

months or even years. The Centers for Disease Control recommends the shingles vaccine for individuals ages 60 and over.

The legislation is supported by the Pharmacists Society of the State of New York because it “will significantly expand access to the shingles vaccine.” The legislation is also supported by a number of other organizations, including AARP, Chain Pharmacy Association of New York State, NAACP, and New York State Association of County Health Officials, as well as the City of New York.

The legislation has also been passed by the Assembly and will be sent to Governor Cuomo for approval.

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