



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terry Gipson

## Gipson & Barrett Aim to Improve Lyme Care to Patients, Protect Doctors

TERRY GIPSON May 22, 2013

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### **GIPSON & BARRETT AIM TO IMPROVE LYME CARE TO PATIENTS, PROTECT DOCTORS**

*ALBANY, NY* – Senator Terry Gipson (D-Rhinebeck) and Assemblymember Didi Barrett (D-Hudson) have introduced the Lyme Disease Doctor Protection Bill. The legislation aims to protect doctors by allowing them to prescribe long-term antibiotic therapy to a person with symptoms of chronic Lyme disease. It would disallow the medical board to deny, revoke, or suspend the license of a physician or discipline any physician who prescribes, administers, or dispenses long-term antibiotic therapy for therapeutic purposes for a patient clinically diagnosed with Lyme disease.

“Protecting doctors who treat patients with chronic Lyme disease is critically important,” said Gipson. “Right now, doctors can often be investigated by insurers and licensing boards because of the lack of a consensus surrounding treatment and diagnosis for chronic Lyme disease.”

“Chronic Lyme disease is a debilitating illness that has had a devastating effect on New Yorkers of all ages, particularly in the Hudson Valley,” said Barrett. “If long-term antibiotic therapy is providing relief to those who are suffering, it should remain an option. This bill protects doctors and patients alike, allowing doctors to make medical judgments without fear of an unwarranted investigation and patients to receive the best possible care.”

Senator Gipson explained that this doctor protection bill for Lyme disease is a companion piece of legislation along with the TickBITE Act (S3478, A5174) in which Assemblymember Barrett is co-

sponsoring the same-as in the Assembly. The TickBITE Act requires insurance companies to cover the cost of treatment for chronic Lyme. That bill has passed the Senate Insurance Committee and is now currently in the Senate Health Committee.

“Lyme disease is a serious health issue in the Hudson Valley and across New York. This legislation provides necessary protections for patients and doctors who are trying to relieve the suffering of people with chronic Lyme by giving them the treatment they need,” Gipson concluded.

Jill Auerbach, chairwoman of the Hudson Valley Lyme Disease Association stated: “I am grateful to Assemblymember Barrett and Senator Gipson for crafting legislation to assure the protection of doctors who are treating those who suffer from chronic Lyme disease. As someone who has battled Lyme disease and its complications for 15 years, I know first hand how chronic Lyme disease can affect a person. As an advocate for patients for almost two decades, I know of the widespread suffering of patients, and how difficult it is for them to become well, when physicians are reticent to treat chronic Lyme for fear of being targeted by those who choose to deny the existence and severity of the disease. With the passage of this legislation, doctors will be able to provide the necessary and appropriate clinical treatment of these patients.”

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