



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

LYME TAKES CENTER STAGE IN NYS CAPITOL

SUSAN SERINO June 1, 2016

| ISSUE: **LYME AND TICK-BORNE DISEASES**

| COMMITTEE: **TASK FORCE ON LYME AND TICK-BORNE DISEASES**



ALBANY, NY—On the heels of Lyme Disease Awareness Month, Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) today convened a meeting of the NYS Senate Taskforce on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases (TBDs) so that members could hear first hand from experts in the field. Additionally, Serino announced that she has introduced a bill ([S. 7777](#)) that represents the first major step in addressing the issue of providing insurance coverage for those struggling with chronic Lyme and TBDs.

Serino, who Chairs the Senate's Taskforce on Lyme and TBDs, said, "I absolutely cannot overstate the importance of this piece of legislation. As Chair, I have heard time and time again from individuals and families who have been devastated physically, emotionally and financially by Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases. It is time that the state recognizes the burden that far too many New Yorkers face as a result of a lack of insurance coverage for those struggling to recover from Lyme and TBDs and this bill is the first major step toward finding a solution that works for both patients and policy holders."

Currently, health insurance companies are not required to cover long term treatment for those who suffer from chronic Lyme or other related diseases and for many New Yorkers, this can result in thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket costs. Serino's bill would require the New York State Health Care Quality and Cost Containment Commission to meet and to submit a report on the potential impact of providing more comprehensive insurance coverage for Lyme and TBDs.

The Commission was established in 2007 to analyze the potential impacts of legislative proposals that would expand coverage, including but not limited to, their effects on health insurance costs and quality. The Commission is charged with evaluating the benefit of the proposed covered service, investigating the current practices of health plans with regard to the proposed service, investigating the potential premium impact, determining what impact the proposed covered service would have on health care quality, and issuing a report of its findings. The Commission is empowered to hold public hearings and obligated to obtain independent and verifiable information from diverse sources within the healthcare industry, from consumers, and from medical personnel.

Thirteen members are supposed to make up the Commission, however the Assembly has failed to appoint its two designated representatives and as a result, the Commission has yet to meet to fulfill these critical duties.

Serino's bill would require the Commission to meet annually on the first Monday of June to consider outstanding requests or duties and it would statutorily require the Commission to

submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature specifically addressing the impact that mandating the coverage of Lyme and TBDs would have on health insurance costs.

“We have a duty to both those who are suffering with these debilitating diseases and those who are already paying exorbitant health insurance premiums to fully understand this issue and find a solution that works,” Serino continued. “No New Yorker should have to choose between overcoming these crippling symptoms and maintaining their quality of life and it is time that the State step up to plate to help those whose lives have been forever changed by Lyme and TBDs.”

The bill was reported from the Senate’s Insurance Committee today.

Further, today’s Taskforce meeting was aimed at continuing awareness for Lyme and TBDs far beyond the month of May.

Serino continued saying, “By educating lawmakers from across the state about the importance of combating the spread of Lyme and TBDs, we can ensure that members fully understand the importance of supporting legislation like the bill introduced today and work to see that the issue remains a priority throughout the Legislative Session and beyond.”

Experts from Cornell University were on hand to give brief presentations to the Taskforce. Presenters included Matthew Frye, PhD, Community Integrated Pest Management Area Educator; Joellen Lampman, School and Turfgrass Integrated Pest Management Support Specialist; and Julie Suarez Assistant Dean of Government and Community Relations.

To view the meeting in its entirety, see below.