



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Chris Jacobs

## Jacobs Appointed to Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease Task Force

SENATOR JACOBS May 6, 2017

| ISSUE: **LYME AND TICK-BORNE DISEASES, FAMILY HEALTH, HEALTH & WELLNESS, HEALTH INSURANCE**



(Buffalo, NY) – New York State Senator Chris Jacobs (60th SD) was appointed to the State Senate’s Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease Task Force by Senate Majority John Flanagan this week. Immediately after the appointment, Jacobs held a press conference with Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease advocates to announce state initiatives aimed at increasing efforts to fight the growing public health epidemic.

“It’s an honor to be appointed to this critically important task force,” said Senator Chris Jacobs. “So many Western New Yorkers have been impacted by these diseases, and now I am looking forward to getting to work with my colleagues to develop policies and identify resources to educate the public and improve outcomes for families affected by these illnesses.”

Despite the severity of the condition, there is a general lack of public awareness of Lyme and tick-borne diseases that creates two significant challenges. One is the difficulty in diagnosing the disease in a timely fashion so it can be more effectively treated. The second is the exorbitant costs associated with treating the disease since health insurance companies are not currently required to cover long-term treatment for people suffering from chronic Lyme or other related diseases.

Jacobs was an advocate for \$400,000 that was included in the recently enacted State Budget to combat Lyme and tick-borne diseases. He is also co-sponsoring legislation (S2168) requiring the New York State Health Care Quality and Cost Containment Commission to submit a report to the governor and the legislature on the impact on health insurance costs of requiring coverage of these diseases.

“I am very pleased that we were able to secure funding in the budget that allows us to further New York State’s Lyme and tick-borne disease research, education and prevention efforts,” said Senator Jacobs. “Of equal importance, we are making strides in researching and analyzing what policy proposals will best address the insurance questions that are currently leaving some individuals and families with the unfair and unreasonable choice of enduring a great financial burden or sacrificing their quality of life,” Jacobs added.

Jacob’s efforts coincide with May being National Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease Awareness Month. Activists throughout the United States use it as an opportunity to organize walks,

5K runs and other events to help educate the public and/or raise funds for research.

Representatives from Lyme WNY participated in the press conference with Jacobs and expressed their support of his efforts while sharing some of their personal experiences with the chronic disease.

“Senator Jacobs’ appointment to the task force and his legislative efforts brings a great deal of hope for much needed relief for patients who struggle with diagnosis and treatment. We are also more optimistic about the path towards reforming New York’s insurance laws to protect the families of those who are affected from incurring huge and devastating medical expenses,” said Rebecca Roll, founder of Lyme WNY, whose husband suffers with the disease. “It is incredulous that while surrounding states acknowledge, diagnose and treat this very real disease, New York State’s efforts have lagged behind. We are hoping Senator Jacobs’ work will result in the changes that we in the Lyme community so desperately need,” she concluded.

For more information about the Senate Task Force’s ongoing efforts to combat Lyme and Tick-Borne diseases, please visit: <https://www.nysenate.gov/committees/task-force-lyme-and-tick-borne-diseases>.