



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## SERINO: TOGETHER WE CAN 'STOP THE BITE'

SUSAN SERINO May 15, 2017

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ALBANY, NY—With a boom in Lyme Disease-carrying black-legged ticks expected this season, Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) ramped up her annual awareness initiative at the State Capitol, urging her colleagues to come together to 'stop the bite' and combat the spread of Lyme and tick-borne diseases (TBDs).

*"Today, we put the spotlight on Lyme and sent a clear message to those who are suffering—to those who have felt the panic, and those whose lives have been forever changed by these diseases—that we remain committed to combatting the spread of tick-borne diseases," said Senator Serino. "The legislation that we*

*passed today represents significant steps forward in the fight against Lyme, and I thank my colleagues for making their passage a priority. It's time to end Lyme here in New York and beyond, and together we are working tirelessly to 'stop the bite.'"*

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), over 300,000 people are diagnosed with Lyme Disease each year throughout the United States, with New York being home to the third highest number of confirmed cases. Senator Serino, who chairs the Senate's Task Force on Lyme and TBDs has made combatting their spread a priority since taking office in 2015, securing over a million dollars in funding for research and prevention and passing a package of bills aimed at educating individuals and families across the state.

**Today, the Senate built on that progress by once again passing a resolution declaring the month of May as 'Lyme Disease Awareness Month' and a package of bills aimed at empowering both homeowners and patients.**

Specifically, the bills passed today include legislation that directs the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation to develop guidelines for best practices in treating residential properties for integrated pest management—the goal ultimately being to rid communities of the ticks that contribute to debilitating infections ([S2588](#)).

Also included in the package is a bill that represents the first significant step towards addressing the lack of insurance coverage available to those diagnosed with chronic Lyme Disease ([S2168](#)). 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 to fully understand the impact it would have on healthcare cost and quality.

Finally, the package included a bill that will empower medical professionals to more effectively recognize and treat tick-borne diseases by authorizing the Department of Health (DOH) to award grants for graduate medical education in Lyme and tick-borne diseases, designate organizations as centers of excellence for Lyme and tick-borne disease, and designate Lyme and tick-borne disease resource centers ([S2621](#)).

*“Misdiagnosing Lyme and TBDs can have absolutely devastating effects on a person’s health, and I have met countless individuals—from across the state—who have been rendered helpless as a result,” said Senator Serino. “Lyme Disease is on the move and it is critical that we are doing all that we can to incentivize our medical professionals to ensure that they have the most up-to-date information to better treat their patients. I cannot overstate the importance of this particular piece of legislation.”*

These two bills are sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblymember Didi Barrett.

While Long Island and the Hudson Valley are traditionally thought to be the epicenter of the problem in the state, the state’s health department reports that it has migrated to counties across the New York in recent years. A fact reflected in the membership of the Senate’s Task Force on Lyme and TBDs, which includes a bi-partisan group of 17 Senators from across the state.

Today, each member of the State Senate was encouraged to wear something green to start a conversation about Lyme and each were invited to participate in the “Take a Bite Out of Lyme’ challenge—a challenge that leverages the power of social media to help spread the word about how truly devastating these diseases can be.