



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

A Pen In Hand Can Save a Life: Governor Cuomo Signs Murphy and Buchwald bills into law

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August 23, 2017

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Legislation Allows Bus Drivers to Administer Epinephrine

Albany, NY - Peanuts, milk, eggs and fish - foods most of us can enjoy without worry - can plunge anyone with a severe food allergy into a life-threatening scenario. Up to 15 million Americans have food allergies, including 5.9 million children under the age of 18, or roughly one out of every 13 children.

As the father of a child with severe allergies, Senator Terrence Murphy carefully monitors what his child eats. He has heard the horror stories, including the sudden death of a Michigan student in 2015 who had an allergic reaction to peanuts while on a school bus. Knowing every second counts in a life or death situation, Senator Murphy sponsored 56005A, legislation allowing school bus drivers to administer an epinephrine auto-injector in the event of an emergency. Assemblyman David Buchwald sponsored A7635A, a corresponding bill in the Assembly. Governor Andrew Cuomo signed both bills into law on August 22.

"Like many parents I am very concerned that my child could have an allergic reaction while riding the school bus. Eating a seemingly harmless snack could result in the immediate closure of a child's airways resulting in respiratory arrest, which only be resolved through an injection of epinephrine," said Senator Murphy. "Previously, only school employees such as nurses were allowed to administer an epinephrine auto-injector. The passing of this new legislation gives the same authority to bus drivers. This legislation can literally save lives."

"Considering the number of children dealing with food allergies today, and the potential for exposure on a school bus, providing drivers with EpiPens is a no-brainer," said Westchester County Executive Robert P. Astorino. "This is common sense legislation that will serve to keep our kids safer."

"I thank Governor Cuomo for signing this legislation and thank in advance the New York State Department of Health that will need to move quickly to issue the regulations necessary for the timely implementation of this act," said Assemblyman Buchwald. "This legislation delivers vitally important protection to our youngsters who have severe allergies."

"For parents of children with food allergies, the school bus can be a dangerous place due to the potential presence of allergens in other children's snacks," said Westchester County Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD. "This bill should reassure parents that their allergic children can safely ride between home and school and will empower school bus drivers to save a child's life in an emergency."

New Castle Supervisor Rob Greenstein stated, "Whether it's distracted driving, railroad safety or tackling heroin and opioid use epidemic, Senator Terrence Murphy has a proven track record on focusing on important safety measures. For kids with allergies, the consequences of exposure to the wrong food can be fatal. However, we have the tools to prevent these tragedies from happening. This legislation is now the law of New York. I commend Senator Murphy for his efforts to protect kids on schools buses."

Stacey Saiontz is an advocate for children with food allergies. Her child suffers from severe food allergies, and as a result, her diet has to be watched closely. "Thank you to Senator Murphy for championing this life saving legislation. This legislation is a triumph for common sense," commented Ms. Saiontz. "New York school bus drivers may now administer life-saving epinephrine without fear that taking steps to stop anaphylaxis could leave them in trouble with their employers or the law. As a mother of a child with allergies, I cannot thank Senator Murphy enough for his hard work to pass this life-saving measure. Several thousand New York school children with food allergies are currently bussed to and from school each day. When a child experiences anaphylaxis, there is simply not enough time to wait for emergency personnel to arrive on the scene. Recently, a school bus driver in another state saved a student's life when emergency personnel could not arrive on the scene in

time. I am so pleased that New York school bus drivers will be able to do the same."

If consumed by a child with an allergy, foods such as peanuts, wheat, soy, eggs and milk, can trigger anaphylaxis, a serious medical emergency that lead to the closing off a child's airway in seconds, resulting in respiratory arrest followed by cardiac arrest, which often leads to death. Epinephrine works to immediately reverse the effects of anaphylaxis and is critical in the treatment of a severe allergic reaction.

Other states including Massachusetts and Illinois have passed legislation to include school bus drivers and other contracted staff among those who can assist or directly administer an epinephrine auto-injector.

The inspiration for Senator Murphy's bill can be traced to an October 2014 incident in Agawam, Massachusetts. A 15-year-old high student known to have a severe nut allergy experienced an intense reaction while on a bus heading for school. School bus driver Susan Lecrenski immediately leapt into action. Unfortunately, the girl had left her EpiPen at home. Stopping the bus on the side of the road, she then yelled out asking if anyone had an EpiPen. Another student had one and Lecrenski administered the epinephrine, effectively saving the girl's life.