



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

SERINO CALLS FOR LYME FUNDING IN 30-DAY BUDGET AMENDMENTS

SUSAN SERINO January 26, 2020

| ISSUE: **LYME AND TICK-BORNE DISEASES, NYS BUDGET**



ALBANY, NY— Senator Sue Serino today is renewing her call for funding to combat Lyme and tick-borne diseases (TBDs) to be included in the Governor's Budget Proposal, urging the Executive to include a significant financial commitment to combatting the epidemic in his 30-Day Budget Amendments.

Senator Serino said, "Last year, for the first time since I took office, we saw funding to combat Lyme and TBDs actually be put on the chopping block. The state has an opportunity to be the leader in combatting

this epidemic that has had devastating impacts on far too many New Yorkers, but year after year, it is left up to the State Senate to include any amount of funding in the final budget. That method has now proven to be unreliable and I am urging the Governor to lead the way in reaffirming the state's commitment to combatting this epidemic by including at least \$1 million for research, education and prevention in his 30-Day Budget Amendments."

Each enacted state budget from 2015 to 2018 included at least \$400,000 expressly dedicated to combatting the epidemic of Lyme and TBDs, with an unprecedented \$1 million added by the State Senate and committed to this purpose in 2018 alone. While the funding the state has committed over the past few years has gone a long way to support research and bring unprecedented awareness to residents of the state, the threat of these infections continues to persist.

Last year, while the Senate's One House Budget included a proposed \$1 million to combat the epidemic, that funding was ultimately left out of the final enacted state budget. After months of tireless advocacy on behalf of Senator Serino and the Lyme community, a public health resolution passed in the Senate at the end of last year's session that added \$250,000 for certain research efforts in this area. While the inclusion of this funding was a step in the right direction, it was the first year since Senator Serino has taken office that the funding dedicated to these efforts decreased so significantly.

Despite the funding cut, the problem not only persists, but continues to grow. The State Department of Health Head has testified before the State Senate that over 10,000 cases of Lyme and TBDs are reported to the Department each year. Last year, the CDC reported that Lyme disease sickens more people in New York than almost any other state.

Serino continued, "At a time when we are seeing new tick species making their way to New York, an increase in the number of reported infections and more geographic areas in the state being impacted than ever before, now is not the time to take steps backward in this fight. This issue impacts every single corner of the state—even New York City residents are not immune, as more and more take to traveling to the surrounding regions only to return to the City 'tick sick' and unable to get answers. Now is the time to

make a significant and effective investment in research and prevention initiatives.”

To those who would argue that the state’s notable fiscal deficit plays a role in the lack of funding included in the Executive Budget Proposal for this issue, **Serino says**, *“I am sensitive to the fiscal constraints the state is facing this year, but budgets are about priorities. The threat presented by Lyme and tick-borne diseases is a public health crisis and to continue to turn a blind eye to it is not only irresponsible, but dangerous—addressing the Lyme and TBD epidemic now needs to be a top priority.”*