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STATE OF NEW YORK



TERRY GIPSON
SENATOR, 41ST DISTRICT

ALBANY OFFICE:

ROOM 617, LOB
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
(518) 455-2303
FAX: (518) 426-6914

DISTRICT OFFICE:

3 NEPTUNE RD., SUITE A19B
POUGHKEEPSIE, NEW YORK 12601
(845) 463-0840
FAX: (845) 463-3438

GIPSON@NYSENATE.GOV
WWW.GIPSON.NYSENATE.GOV

February 11, 2014

Nirav R. Shah, M.D.
Commissioner
New York State Department of Health
Corning Tower
Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12237

Dear Commissioner Shah:

I am writing to thank you for your testimony during the recent joint legislative budget hearing on health and to follow up on our discussion regarding Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses. Specifically, I would like to request that you seriously consider expanding funding for the research of these debilitating diseases during this year's budget process.

As you are aware, Lyme disease and other tick borne illnesses pose serious public health concerns that must be addressed. Recent reports from the CDC indicate that the number of individuals infected with Lyme disease is nearly ten times greater than the number of reported cases. New York State, and in particular the Hudson Valley, has been "ground zero" for these diseases, and yet funding for tick related research in the state has dropped by over fifty percent since 2008, falling from \$150,000 to only \$69,500. I find this lack of funding unacceptable, and I know that those currently suffering from Lyme Disease and those bound to suffer in the future would agree.

Research is the first step in tackling these issues and it must be adequately funded. I strongly urge you to consider expanding research funding for Lyme disease and other tick borne illnesses to the level of \$1 million as outlined in my legislation, Tick RAID (S.5983). We must take swift action to enhance our understanding of these illnesses and strive for greater success in education and prevention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Terry Gipson".

Terry Gipson
Senator, 41st District

cc: Betsey Ball, Larry Schwartz, Joseph Percoco