

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



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November 17, 2021

Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Re: Lyme Funding Request

Dear Governor Hochul:

As you prepare your first Executive Budget Proposal as the Governor of New York State, we write to you with optimism that many issues that have long been overlooked will now be tackled head-on as we seek to rebuild in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. One such issue is the scourge of Lyme and tick-borne diseases (TBDs) and its impact on New York State residents. Year after year, requests to have dedicated funding for Lyme and TBD research, education and prevention efforts included in the Executive Budget Proposal have fallen on deaf ears, and it has been incumbent upon the State Legislature to secure significant funding for these efforts through budget negotiations. New York State is the epicenter of the Lyme and TBD epidemic. What once was a Hudson Valley and Long Island issue, has quickly spread across the state, and we cannot afford to allow this epidemic to be just another bargaining chip in budget negotiations. In light of this, **we respectfully ask you to include a historic \$1.5 million to fund research, education and prevention initiatives to combat the scourge of Lyme and TBDs in your Executive Budget Proposal.**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), New York State had the second highest reported confirmed cases of Lyme disease in the country in 2019, the most recent year such statistic is available. In total, the CDC estimates that nearly half a million people contract Lyme disease each year in the United States. Unfortunately, many of the symptoms of Lyme and other TBDs mimic other diseases—including COVID-19. This, combined with a general lack of awareness surrounding these diseases, leads to many of those who contract a TBD completely unaware of their affliction. The surge in outdoor exploration of New York's scenic parks and trails that was brought on by the pandemic, particularly by visitors from New York City, while a great boon for the State, also highlights the need to ensure those who may be less familiar with tick prevention are aware of appropriate precautions they should take to stay tick-free.

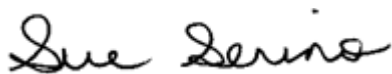
Lyme and TBDs are a problem that will only continue to worsen exponentially if it is not appropriately addressed immediately. According to the New York State Department of Health (DOH), the reported cases of TBDs more than doubled in the State from 2004-2016, and efforts to combat this crisis have severely lagged in recent years. As you may know, between 2015 and 2018, the Final Enacted State Budget included at least \$400,000 in funding for research, education and prevention efforts—including a historic investment of \$1 million in 2018—none of which originated from the Executive Budget Proposal. Each Final Enacted State

Budget since then has included \$250,000 toward such efforts, all of which had to be added by the Legislature to the Final Enacted Budget.

Our hope is that this upcoming year will be the first time the Executive Budget Proposal will reflect the seriousness of Lyme and TBDs. For too long, advocates and those suffering from these diseases have felt that their voice is not being heard in Albany. These illnesses pose a threat to New Yorkers of all walks of life, and addressing this challenge should not be treated as an afterthought. Budgets are about priorities, and it is time for New York to be a leader on this issue by making adequate investments and signaling to patients who have been suffering in silence for far too long that this issue is being treated as the real priority it should be. For these reasons, we hope we can count on you to be a partner in this effort by **including at least \$1.5 million for Lyme and TBDs research, education and prevention efforts in your Executive Budget Proposal.**

We appreciate your time and attention to this urgent matter, and we look forward to partnering with you in this effort.

Sincerely,



Senator Sue Serino
41st Senate District



Senator Robert G. Ort
62nd Senate District



Senator Fred Akshar
52nd Senate District



Senator Alessandra Biaggi
34th Senate District




Senator George M. Borrello
57th Senate District



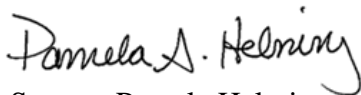
Senator Phil Boyle
4th Senate District




Senator Patrick M. Gallivan
59th Senate District



Senator Joseph A. Griffo
47th Senate District



Senator Pamela Helming
54th Senate District



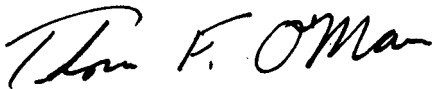
Senator Daphne Jordan
43rd Senate District



Senator Andrew J. Lanza
24th Senate District



Senator Mario R. Mattera
2nd Senate District



Senator Thomas F. O'Mara
58th Senate District



Senator Edward A. Rath III
61st Senate District



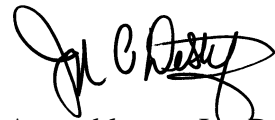
Senator Daniel G. Stec
45th Senate District



Senator Alexis Weik
3rd Senate District



Assemblyman Kevin M. Byrne
94th Assembly District



Assemblyman Joe DeStefano
3rd Assembly District



Assemblyman Jeff Gallahan
131st Assembly District



Senator Mike Martucci
42nd Senate District



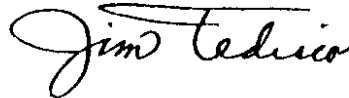
Senator Peter Oberacker
51st Senate District



Senator Anthony H. Palumbo
1st Senate District



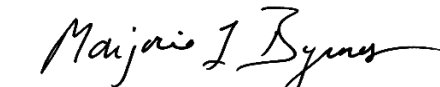
Senator Patty Ritchie
48th Senate District



Senator James Tedisco
49th Senate District



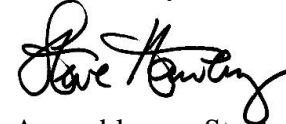
Assemblyman Karl Brabenec
98th Assembly District



Assemblywoman Marjorie Byrnes
133rd Assembly District



Assemblyman Steve Englebright
4th Assembly District



Assemblyman Stephen Hawley
139th Assembly District



Assemblyman Mike Lawler
97th Assembly District



Assemblyman Brian Manktelow
130th Assembly District



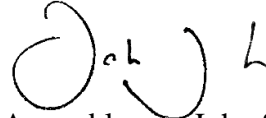
Assemblyman John K. Mikulin
17th Assembly District



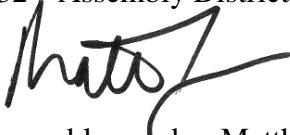
Assemblyman Brian D. Miller
101st Assembly District



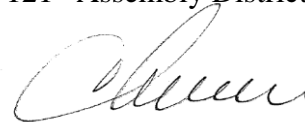
Assemblymember Philip A. Palmesano
132nd Assembly District



Assemblyman John Salka
121st Assembly District



Assemblymember Matthew Simpson
114th Assembly District



Assemblyman Chris Tague
102nd Assembly District



Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr.
1st Assembly District



Assemblyman Mark Walczyk
116th Assembly District