

THE SENATE



STATE OF NEW YORK

March 1, 2021

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Senate Majority Leader
New York State Capitol
Room 330
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Robert G. Ortton
Senate Minority Leader
New York State Capitol
Room 315
Albany, NY 12224

Re: Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease Funding

Dear Senate Conference Leaders:

As you know, once again the Governor's Executive Budget Proposal failed to include any funding to combat the spread of Lyme and tick-borne diseases. Not only did the proposal cut the \$250,000 in legislative additions provided last year, the Executive Budget Proposal even went further by cutting the \$69,400 in the Department of Health Aid to Localities Budget Bill that has comprised the only source of funding exclusively dedicated to Lyme and TBD research, prevention and detection efforts in the Governor's proposed budgets each year. It is critical that public health is our top priority in this year's State Budget, and we respectfully urge you to **include at least \$1.5 million in funding expressly for combating the scourge of Lyme and TBDS** in the Senate One-House Budget Proposal and work to ensure it remains in the final enacted budget.

Recent studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that almost half a million people are diagnosed and treated for Lyme disease each year in the United States—a significant update from the CDC's previous estimate of approximately 300,000 cases annually. Meanwhile, cases of other TBDS have also been on the rise and spreading geographically. Although cases historically were concentrated in the Hudson Valley and Long Island, the epidemic has been spreading north and west across the State, and even become prevalent in New York City—as a New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene advisory noted an upward trend of TBDS in the city since 2000, including a 45% increase of cases of anaplasmosis from 2018 to 2019.

Further complicating the scourge of Lyme and tick-borne diseases this past year has been the public health crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the symptoms of tick-borne illnesses are similar to those of COVID-19; in fact, symptoms of TBDs are known for mimicking those of many other illnesses, often leading to misdiagnosis. There was also a surge of New Yorkers taking advantage of our State's great outdoors during the warmer months as people sought socially distanced activities such as hiking, which could likely translate to an increase in tick encounters, potentially for many individuals who are unfamiliar with ticks and the necessary precautions.

As you know, New York State included at least \$400,000 in each enacted budget from 2015 to 2018 dedicated to Lyme and TBDs education, research and prevention efforts, including a historic \$1 million commitment in 2018. Unfortunately, while the Lyme and TBDs epidemic has steadily increased over the years, New York's commitment to combating the effort has not kept up as the previous two State Budgets included only \$250,000 each year. Now, more than ever, New York needs to renew and build on previous investments in battling these diseases by making an appropriate fiscal commitment to this issue. New York State ranks as one of the most highly impacted states by Lyme, with the third highest total of confirmed cases, according to CDC statistics for 2018, the most recent year for which data is available. As New York is one of the leading states in terms of case totals, it would be appropriate for New York to also lead in our fiscal commitment to tackling this critical issue.

We appreciate your time and attention to this urgent matter, and look forward to working with you on this critical request.

Sincerely,



Senator Sue Serino
41st District



Senator Fred Akshar
52nd District



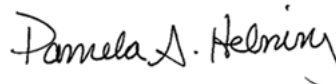
Senator George M. Borrello
57th District



Senator Phil Boyle
4th District



Senator Jeremy A. Cooney
56th District



Senator Pamela Helming
54th District



Senator Daphne Jordan
43rd District



Senator Mike Martucci
42nd District



Senator Mario R. Mattera
2nd District



Senator Peter Oberacker
51st District



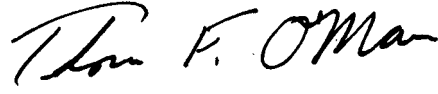
Senator Edward A. Rath III
61st District



Senator Daniel G. Stec
45th District



Senator Alexis Weik
3rd District



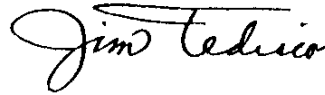
Senator Thomas F. O'Mara
58th District



Senator Anthony H. Palumbo
1st District



Senator Patty Ritchie
48th District



Senator James Tedisco
49th District