

Senator Pam Helming

Representing the 54th New York Senate District



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Senator Helming Announces Passage of Bill to Study Link Between Lyme Disease and Mental Health

GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming today announced that the State Senate unanimously passed legislation that she co-sponsors to require New York State to study the link between Lyme and tick-borne diseases and mental illnesses. As Senate Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources and a member of the Senate’s Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases, Senator Helming has made supporting additional research of these diseases a top priority.

“Lyme and tick-borne diseases is a growing public health issue throughout the Wayne-Finger Lakes region and across New York State. As Senate Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, I have worked to highlight the impact that these infectious diseases have on our farmers and local communities. After hearing directly from patients, advocates, doctors, and scientists, it is clear to me that there are still too many unanswered questions about the toll Lyme and tick-borne diseases take on individuals. Further research will provide the public with the most accurate, up-to-date information. I am proud to be a member of the Senate Task Force on Lyme and Tick-borne Diseases. I am hopeful the Governor will join us in giving farmers and families the tools and information they need to protect themselves,” Senator Helming said.

The bill (S.7171), which was sponsored by the bipartisan members of the Senate Task Force who represent different areas of New York State, would require the State Office of Mental Hygiene and Department of Health to study the impact that infectious diseases and blood-borne pathogens like Lyme and tick-borne diseases may have on mental health issues in infected individuals. The bill would require the study to be submitted by Oct. 1, 2019 in a process that could lead to better understanding of the incredible impact these diseases can have on the people’s overall health.

Last August, Senator Helming participated with her Task Force colleagues in a public hearing that looked critically at the state’s response to the Lyme and tick-borne disease epidemic and heard testimony from patients, public health experts, and mental health professionals. Their statements indicated that psychiatric symptoms related to Lyme and tick-borne diseases could directly impact the quality of life and long-term health of patients if not properly addressed.

Senator Helming subsequently hosted an informational forum on Lyme and tick-borne diseases last September to bring the conversation on this epidemic to the Wayne-Finger Lakes region and

raise more awareness of the issues involved with it. A panel of medical and scientific professionals as well as a patient advocate shared their knowledge and expertise on these diseases. Senator Helming will continue to be part of the effort to develop a comprehensive statewide action plan to effectively address the spread of Lyme and tick-borne diseases and understand the possible mental health consequences of these infectious diseases.

Senator Helming represents the 54th Senate District, which consists of Seneca and Wayne Counties, parts of Cayuga and Ontario Counties, and the towns of Lansing and Webster. For more information, please visit Senator Helming's [website](#), or follow @SenatorHelming on Facebook or Twitter.

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