



NEW JERSEY SENATE

SENATE CHAMBERS

P.O. Box 099

TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0099

October 3, 2014

Commissioner Mary E. O'Dowd
Department of Health
P.O. Box 360
Trenton, NJ 08625-0360

Dear Commissioner O'Dowd,

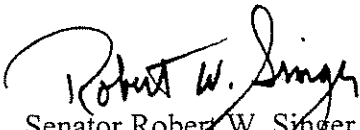
As you know, this week the United States was confronted with its first patient infected with the Ebola virus after a patient presented himself to a hospital in the state of Texas. If media accounts are correct, it appears that hospitals and health officials in Texas may not have been appropriately prepared to deal with the issues involved in protecting the public health from a virus of this severity. We, as state policy makers are writing to you to inquire what New Jersey is doing to prepare if a case arises in New Jersey.

We are aware the Department of Health's Division of Epidemiology, Environmental and Occupational Health issued a memorandum on August 11, 2014 to New Jersey First Responders with appropriate protocols to handle potential Ebola virus cases. Additionally, we are aware of efforts on the part of the New Jersey Hospital Association to ensure that any Ebola patients that present in New Jersey are handled appropriately. However, as we saw in Texas, mistakes can be made. Is the Department of Health working with hospitals to avoid similar missteps from occurring here in New Jersey?

Further, is the Department of Health working with county and local health officials to develop appropriate protocols for the care of persons who may need to be placed under quarantine? More specifically, are protocols being developed to guarantee that those placed under quarantine be provided with food, supplies and appropriate sanitization of personal effects?

Understandably, the state of New Jersey must work in concert with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regarding the protection of the public from this potential health crisis. However, as state officials we must make sure we are doing all we can at a state level to ensure that our health care professionals and citizens are prepared in the event of an Ebola case that presents here in New Jersey. We would appreciate an update on your efforts to coordinate our public healthcare resources.

Sincerely,


Senator Robert W. Singer


Senator Thomas H. Kean, Jr.