



Senate of Pennsylvania

Senator John T. Yudichak

14th Senatorial District

MEMO

To: *All Senators*
From: *Senator John Yudichak*
Date: *May 19, 2011*
Subject: *Introduction of Legislation to Address Suspected
Cancer or Disease Clusters*

Several months ago I was contacted by residents in my district who noticed that an unusually large number of people in their neighborhood had cancer. Obviously, the residents are concerned for their health and that of their neighbors. They are looking for answers and would like to know if environmental conditions in the area are causing unusually high cancer rates. (There is a well-known Superfund site in the area.)

Responding to a suspected cancer or disease cluster is difficult as there are many federal, state, and local agencies involved. The response time is lengthy and requires investigation, documentation, and coordination. The information provided to residents is often technical and inconclusive.

There is a need for better documentation and investigation of cancer and disease clusters in Pennsylvania so that they can be properly identified and the possible causes addressed.

Modeled after federal legislation, I plan on introducing a bill that would establish a process for the Department of Health and the Department of Environmental Protection to follow whenever there is a suspected cancer or disease cluster.

The legislation provides for a definition of a “disease or cancer cluster” and provides the Department of Health with clear authority to investigate the possible causes.

The bill would also allow for the development of an interdisciplinary response team to investigate suspected cancer or disease clusters and report back to the Secretary of Health. People would be given the opportunity to petition the Department of Health to have the response team conduct an investigation. Finally, the Department of Health will be able to establish community advisory committees in areas where there is a suspected cancer or disease cluster.

If you would like to cosponsor this legislation, please contact my office at 787-7105 or email Richard Fox at rfox@pasenate.com. Thank you for your consideration.