



# Peggy Lillis Foundation

*Fighting C. diff through Education and Advocacy*

## Advocate Award Introduction – Rich Dexter

Hello everyone. I'm Rich Dexter and I'm really happy to be here tonight, presenting this award to an exceptional advocate.

For those who do not know me, this is my third FIGHT C. DIFF Gala. My first was back in 2014, when the Peggy Lillis Foundation honored my family with the first-ever Advocates Award. We became involved with PLF after the death of my mother, Judy, to a C. diff infection in May 2013. Like Christian and Liam, my father, my siblings and me were determined to channel the loss of our mother into something meaningful to help other families.

We started the summer after Mom died by holding the inaugural Judy Dexter Memorial Picnic and Cornhole Tournament in our home state of Maryland. Our first year was great. Between the picnic and donations in memory of Mom we raised over \$10,000. We wanted to know what else we could do to help. Since then I've been a member of PLF's Advocates Council. Last summer I attended the Advocates Summit where I meet so many people from across the country, just as committed to ending this disease as we are. I also learned a great deal about C. diff and how to make a difference in this fight.

It's my pleasure to introduce Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson. Senator Hassell-Thompson has been a champion for the most vulnerable New Yorkers her entire career. She began as a pediatric nurse and substance abuse counselor, working with children of color and later adults struggling with addiction. Through her work, she heard so many tragic stories. That made her want to be a change agent. After retiring from Mount Vernon Hospital, she founded "The Gathering," a volunteer-staffed women's center in Mt. Vernon that provided counseling and support services. As a health educator, Ms. Hassell-Thompson worked with persons infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Senator Hassell-Thompson began her public service as a member of the Mount Vernon City Council in 1993. She later served as council president and acting mayor. She was first elected to the New York State Senate in 2000, where she brought years of public service and community involvement to her post as the Senator of the 36th Senatorial District; representing parts of the Bronx and Westchester Counties.



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In July, Senator Hassell-Thompson retired from the New York Senate to join Governor Andrew Cuomo's administration as Special Advisor for Policy and Community Affairs, for New York State Housing and Community Renewal. Like Peggy and my mother Judy, the senator has a special love for children. She is currently working on a pet project to create affordable housing for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.

Finally, Senator Hassell-Thompson knows about C. diff infections firsthand. Not just as a nurse, but also as a survivor. Following knee surgery, she was diagnosed with C. diff, and, thankfully, treated appropriately and made a full recovery. The Senator recently shared her story with the Peggy Lillis Foundation to help us raised awareness.

Please join me in welcoming our other 2016 Advocates Award recipient, Senator Ruth Hasell-Thompson.