

Public Health Committee - HB 6200- An Act Concerning the Use of
Long-Term Antibiotics for the Treatment of Lyme Disease

My name is Peggy Reeves. I am the State Representative of the 143rd District,
representing Wilton and Norwalk. I live at 56 Hemmelskamp Road, Wilton.

As you are aware, Lyme disease got its name from Lyme, CT, where arthritis –like
symptoms were noted in a cluster of cases among children and adults back in the 1970's.
But it could as well be called Wilton disease or Norwalk disease or Ridgefield disease as it
is close to an epidemic among my constituents. Whether I am at the local hardware store,
at the market or at Town Hall, the topic of discussion is Lyme disease. Who has it, what
form is it (ehrlichiosis, babesiosis), who are you seeing for it...are you feeling any better?
If it is a child, how much school have they missed, how much of their college years were
lost?

Lyme disease has affected every member of my own family, including the family dog.

My husband has suffered from chronic Lyme disease since 1994. He suffers from severe
joint and muscular pain in his shoulders, neck, elbows and hands, as well as feverish
feelings, night sweats and various neurological manifestations including distress, anxiety,
fatigue and irritability. His symptoms were misdiagnosed until 1997. Because of the
misdiagnosis, he underwent painful cortisone shots and then finally intensive elbow
surgery at Beth Israel in NYC where a team of surgeons cut and reattached the tendons in
both elbows, believing he had a sports injury.

He has taken lengthy courses of antibiotics over the last 12 years and although the
symptoms never completely go away, these periodic treatments of antibiotics have clearly
helped to achieve several lengthy periods of remission(in this regard, the disease acts a lot
like malaria and it is often treated with an anti-malarial drug).

My daughter was first diagnosed with Lyme disease in the early 1990's when she was
about 7 or 8. She is now 24 and still suffers with joint and muscle pain, fatigue, and
neurological symptoms. Like my husband, she has also been on and off antibiotics. I
never wanted her on antibiotics for an extended period of time. I am aware of the issues
with the overuse of antibiotics. But the alternative would have been a reduced quality of
life for an active young woman, who was captain of her high school cross-country team
and a Connecticut Scholar-Athlete of the Year.

Other people testifying today will say that there is no such thing as chronic Lyme...that it
is some other unnamed disease. Or they will say that most of these people never had a tick
bite, that their doctors just invented the diagnosis for want of anything else. In the case of
my husband and daughter, they each had an embedded and engorged deer tick on more
than one occasion. My daughter also had the classic bulls-eye rash; my husband did not.

This proposed bill does not seek to change our insurance laws. We have an excellent
statute in place that covers medical costs associated with a diagnosis of Lyme. What we
are seeking to do is to protect the doctor-patient relationship. We do not think that public
agencies should use their regulatory and licensing powers to punish those doctors who are
only seeking the best course of treatment for their patients.