



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

March 8, 2013

Jewel Mullen, MD, MPH, MPA, Commissioner, 860-509-7101

House Bill 5104 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY LYME DISEASE TESTING.

House Bill 5104 would establish a task force to study Lyme disease testing. The task force would review policies for Lyme disease testing in Connecticut and other states. The Department of Public Health (DPH) feels that this bill is unnecessary and that such a task force would be duplicative efforts that have already taken place in the state and on the national level.

The public health approach to Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases is focused on disease prevention. The DPH does not make recommendations concerning the diagnosis and treatment of Lyme disease. The ultimate decision regarding care of a particular patient should be made by the healthcare provider and patient.

For more than 25 years, providing the people of Connecticut with information about how to prevent tick-borne diseases has involved three state agencies: the DPH, The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES), and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). Comprehensive materials for the public and on the prevention of tick-borne diseases can be found on the websites of these three state agencies (<http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3136&q=395590>).

The task force created by this bill would unnecessarily duplicate the recently completed review conducted by the Institute of Medicine at the request of the National Institutes of Health and would require additional DPH staffing to implement. The Institute of Medicine held a workshop October 11-12, 2010, to examine the state of the science in Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases. Speakers discussed current research and knowledge gaps; criteria for diagnosing tick-borne diseases; the groups most vulnerable to acquiring tick-borne diseases; and the experiences of those with tick-borne diseases. The workshop report was released on April 20, 2011 and is available for free online at <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2011/Critical-Needs-and-Gaps-in-Understanding-Prevention-Amelioration-and-Resolution-of-Lyme-and-Other-Tick-Borne-Diseases.aspx>.

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At the DPH, Lyme disease surveillance and prevention activities are funded through two cooperative agreements with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Currently, we have \$37,800 in federal funding to support Lyme disease surveillance activities. In 2013 we have \$446,746 in CDC TickNET funding to implement the following activities: 1) a full scale evaluation of the effectiveness of rodent targeted bait boxes, 2) a study to quantify the role of peridomestic (around the home) exposure in Lyme disease and other tickborne diseases and 3) develop a protocol and study instruments to conduct a future evaluation of the economic burden of Lyme disease.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's view on this bill.

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