



**Connecticut Department of Public Health**

**Testimony Presented Before the Committee on Children  
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**Commissioner Jewel Mullen, MD, MPH, MPA  
860-509-7101**

**Senate Bill # 207 An Act Concerning Funding for a Lyme Disease Prevention and Education Program.**

The Department of Public Health provides the following information regarding Senate Bill # 207.

Surveillance has shown Connecticut to have one of the highest rates of Lyme disease in the country. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has estimated there are approximately 10 times more people diagnosed with Lyme disease than reported, resulting in approximately 30,000 people likely diagnosed in Connecticut annually. In addition, the same tick species that transmits Lyme disease also transmits anaplasmosis, ehrlichiosis and babesiosis to people.

Lyme disease is generally a mild illness in the early stages of disease and treatment of patients is usually effective. The disease may, however, cause serious or chronic illness involving multiple body systems, and this underscores the importance of using prevention measures. Research has shown if employed sufficiently, personal protection measures, and environmental tick-control measures around the home can reduce the number of Lyme disease cases.

From 1998 through 2007, federal funding supported development and evaluation of prevention programs in the Westport-Weston, Ledge Light and Torrington Area health districts. During 2008, Department funds supported establishment of additional programs conducted by the Ridgefield Health Department and the Northeast District Department of Health. A handbook, "How to Establish a Local Health Tick-borne Disease Community Intervention Program" was distributed to all local health departments in Connecticut and included a combined format of printed materials and CDs with materials available for copy. However, a survey of directors of health showed the major barriers to implementation and maintenance of a community tick-borne diseases prevention program were insufficient funds and staff.

A statewide prevention program focused on raising awareness of tick-borne disease based on tick reduction strategies for residential properties and personal protection methods to prevent tick bites, and early diagnosis of tick-borne diseases has the potential to reduce the occurrence of tickborne diseases in Connecticut. Mass media messaging and a network of community educators would be effective in complementing the strengths of each strategy. A multi-faceted program based on an existing program would provide advantages in efficiency and name recognition. Unfortunately, given the forecasted budget shortfall for the upcoming biennium and the costs associated with this bill, the department is not supportive of this proposal at this time.

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

*Phone: (860) 509-7269, Fax: (860) 509-7100, Telephone Device for the Deaf (860) 509-7191  
410 Capitol Avenue - MS # 13GRE, P.O. Box 340308 Hartford, CT 06134  
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