

Chairs and Members of the Committee:

I will not be able to attend the hearing because of my heavy teaching load this semester but I would like to support of Raised Bill No. 207, AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR A LYME DISEASE PREVENTION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM. I ask the Connecticut Department of Health (DPH) to award \$450,000 to implement and sustain a statewide Lyme disease prevention effort combining mass media marketing and community-based education based on the BLAST Lyme prevention model.

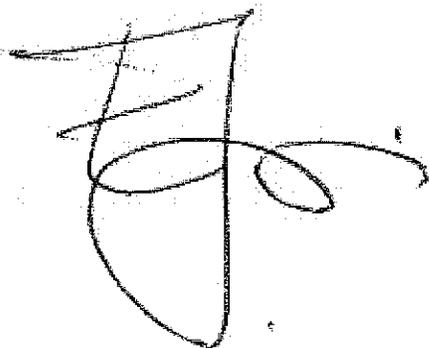
Selecting an existing evidence-based program is both efficient and cost effective. The BLAST Program has built name recognition as well as valuable private, corporate and public health partnerships over the past six years. Its recommendations are ones all Connecticut citizens will benefit from. Supporting regional BLAST educators with advertising, public relations and social media marketing is an excellent strategy to reinforce the key prevention points especially during peak infection months.

This request for funding comes at a time when citizens are increasingly concerned that forty years after the illness was discovered in our state, Connecticut continues to have one of the highest rates of Lyme disease in the country. The problem is even more serious now that we know the same tick species that transmits the agent that causes Lyme also transmits anaplasmosis, ehrlichiosis and babesiosis to people. Research has shown, if employed sufficiently, personal protection measures, and environmental tick-control measures around the home can reduce the number of cases.

Lyme disease can cause serious or chronic illness involving multiple body systems, and this underscores the importance of using prevention measures. People at the highest risk for tick-transmitted diseases, including Lyme disease, are children under 10 and adults over 55 years of age.

A commitment of state funds is needed to implement and sustain a statewide prevention program focused on raising awareness of tick-borne disease prevention in 2015.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Eva Sapi', written in a cursive style.

Eva Sapi Ph.D.

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