

January 24, 2015

Chairs and Members of the Committee on Children

I am writing to express my support of Raised Bill No. 207, an act concerning fund for a Lyme disease prevention and education program. I believe that the Connecticut Department of Health should be granted \$450,000 to apply and sustain a statewide Lyme disease prevention awareness program including the use of social media based on the BLAST Lyme prevention program.

I am 13 years old and was diagnosed with Lyme disease in October 2014. Lyme is a severe disease that impacts you negatively. It is hard to cope with, especially in school, reading books, or even competing in my sports club with I had no problem with my entire life. I honestly had very little knowledge of the life changing effects this disease can have. I do not want more children to struggle and have pain that this disease causes. Children should be happy, healthy, and have a bright future. But, in Connecticut, the risk of catching Lyme disease is extremely high, and we should make an effort, more now than ever, to help educate parents of young children as well as our senior citizens.

Today social media plays an immense role in children's lives. From Instagram, to Twitter, people comment, blog, and start websites to inform the public about topics that may not convey as much as of an importance as Lyme disease does. With Ridgefield's community coordinator of the program BLAST, Jennifer Reid and your help in passing this bill, I believe we can convey the message of BLAST and help people protect themselves and prevent disease. Personally, I spend a vast amount of time on social media and the internet every day. If I ever came across a pop up or engaging message about Lyme disease I would stop and put my attention towards it due to its impact on me and many others.

As of now, we only have one BLAST program located in Ridgefield, CT. But as each day passes, more people are becoming infected, and our community needs to know how to prevent that from occurring. By establishing this program with \$450,000, our state can improve tremendously on the number of people informed about the risks of Lyme disease and therefore the numbers of people becoming ill. That money would mean the world to me because I would not want any child in the world to struggle with such an horrible and preventable disease. I know being so young may make you believe that I do not have the same capabilities and sincerity as others, but I assure you, I know from experiencing it every day, it is as important to me as it is to anybody else. Connecticut continues to have one of the highest rates of Lyme disease in the country. By establishing more BLAST programs across the state, more will become aware and involved, and less will become ill.

This funding would be the start of what could be a continuation of preventing children and adults for becoming infected with Lyme.

In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, I quote, "And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must do it because Conscience tells him its right". Please pass this bill in honor of those suffering everyday.

Sincerely,
Gabrielle Kahn
Bethel, CT