



## TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD

Department of Social Services

January 26, 2015

Chairs and Members of the Committee on Children

I am writing in support of Raised Bill No. 207, AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR A LYME DISEASE PREVENTION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM. I believe the Connecticut Department of Health (DPH) should be awarded \$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 may also transmit other forms of tick borne illness 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.

While Lyme disease is generally a mild illness when diagnosed and treated quickly, the disease may cause serious or chronic illness involving multiple body systems, and this underscores the importance of using prevention measures.

I work within the mental health and social service environment, where I have met many people who have been debilitated by complications that arise from tick borne illness. While some get better; many have chronic lifelong complications that impact their ability to complete an education, maintain employment, put people on a revolving door of complicated medical needs, disrupt people's family lives and derail their pursuit of a decent quality of life.

Lyme disease is a public health hazard; and it can be prevented and mitigated.

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. I am unable to attend the related hearing.

Sincerely,

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Director of Social Services  
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