



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

March 12, 2024

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 1351 - Health Insurance – Lyme Disease and Related Tick–Borne Illnesses – Long–Term Antibiotic Treatment – Letter of Opposition

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of opposition for House Bill (HB) 1351 - Health Insurance – Lyme Disease and Related Tick–Borne Illnesses – Long–Term Antibiotic Treatment. This bill will require certain insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations to provide coverage for the full length of long-term antibiotic treatment of Lyme disease and related tick-borne illnesses.

Antibiotics are important treatments for many conditions; however, unnecessary antibiotic use provides no benefit to patients, and can put them at risk of adverse events according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC notes that studies have shown that long-term antibiotic treatment, particularly treatment with long-term intravenous antibiotics, does not improve long-term outcomes for patients diagnosed with chronic Lyme Disease. The report also provides examples of severe complications that occurred in patients who received long-term antibiotic treatment because of a diagnosis of chronic Lyme disease.¹ These complications include cases of septic shock, osteomyelitis (inflammation or swelling that occurs in the bone), *Clostridium difficile* colitis (inflammation of the colon), and other serious and sometimes life-threatening complications.

In an effort to advance safety and reduce these poor outcomes, antimicrobial stewardship programs (ASPs) at the international, national, and local levels are working to measure and improve how antibiotics are prescribed by clinicians and used by patients.² ASPs ensure that antibiotics are used only when necessary and appropriate. The Department promulgates national ASP guidance regarding prescribing appropriate antibiotics for the appropriate length of time

¹ Marzec NS, et al, “Serious Bacterial Infections Acquired During Treatment of Patients Given a Diagnosis of Chronic Lyme Disease – United States,” Centers for Disease Control Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 16 June 2017: Vol. 66, No. 23, 2 March 2021 <<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/mm6623a3.htm>>.

² “Core Elements of Antibiotic Stewardship.” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 7 Sept.. 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/core-elements/index.html>

according to the most recent evidence-based guidance provided by Infectious Diseases Society of America, American Academy of Neurology, and American College of Rheumatology. Long-term antibiotic treatment of Lyme disease and related tick-borne illnesses runs counter to this evidence-based guidance; as a result, the Department recommends against the requirements in this bill.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary