



**County
Health Officials
of New York**

Leading the way to healthier communities

OPPOSES

A.1183/S.998 (Cahill/Hoylman)

AN ACT to amend the insurance law, in relation to coverage of long-term medical care for Lyme disease and other tick-borne related pathogens; and to amend the tax law and the State finance law, in relation to providing for taxpayer gifts for tick borne illness research, detection and education and establishing the tick borne illness research, detection and education fund

The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) opposes the above-referenced legislative proposal, which would perpetuate misinformation and treatment regarding clinical practices inconsistent with medical and clinical standards related to Lyme disease.

While NYSACHO supports an increased focus on Lyme disease prevention and treatment, the proposed bill supports and encourages certain aspects of Lyme disease treatment that are inconsistent both with public health strategies, and medical and clinical knowledge. Current published medical literature refutes the theory that Lyme disease pathogens remain within an individual's system after a course of antibiotic treatment. Long term sequelae of Lyme disease, potentially related to autoimmune response, can be debilitating and health care providers should have resources to respond to individuals' needs as they should for all medical needs. However, legislation based on erroneous knowledge is not in the best interest of the public's health.

Public health interventions focus on population health, with an emphasis on prevention. With respect to tick-borne diseases such as Lyme, public education about prevention is critical. Preventing disease before it occurs is the best outcome. A legislative emphasis on antibiotic treatment, particularly when such treatment can actually cause harm is contrary to the public's best interest. In November, 2020, the Infectious Disease Society of America, the American Academy of Neurology and the American College of Rheumatology released updated clinical guidelines for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of Lyme disease. These recommendations included a review of currently available evidence and discussion regarding persistent symptoms of Lyme disease, colloquially referred to as "chronic Lyme disease." The clinical guidelines concluded with the recommendation that "*for patients who have persistent or recurring nonspecific symptoms such as fatigue, pain, or cognitive impairment following recommended treatment for Lyme disease, but who lack objective evidence of reinfection or treatment failure, we recommend against additional antibiotic therapy.*"

Despite these recommendations, the proposed legislation emphasizes a particular clinical treatment, in this case, long-term antibiotics, which can have significant individual side effects on patients, and also play a role in antibiotic resistance. NYSACHO strongly believes that clinical decision making should not be mandated by Public Health Law; clinical decisions should be made between an individual and his/her health care provider after a discussion of the best available clinical evidence and recommendations.

NYSACHO opposes this legislation, which has the potential to be harmful towards those suffering from such diseases and takes away from the much needed focus on prevention and education. NYSACHO strongly opposes bills not based on accurate clinical information and strongly opposes this bill's enactment into law.

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