SPONSOR: Sen. Peterson
Sens. Henry, Sokola, Venables, Reps. Spence, Gilligan, Keeley

DELAWARE STATE SENATE

142nd GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 40

CREATING A TASK FORCE TO EXAMINE THE PREVALENCE OF LYME DISEASE IN THIS STATE AND TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PREVENTION OF LYME DISEASE AND FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF MISDIAGNOSIS OF LYME DISEASE.

WHEREAS, Lyme disease is a common but frequently misunderstood illness that, if not diagnosed and treated early, can cause serious and chronic health problems; and

WHEREAS, Lyme disease is a bacterial infection caused by Borrelia burgdorferi (Bb), a spiral or cork screw shaped bacterium called a spirochete, and is known to be transmitted in multiple ways, including but not limited to, by a tick bite, in utero, mother's milk, blood transfusions and organ donation; and

WHEREAS, early signs of infection may include a rash and flu-like symptoms such as fever, muscle aches, headaches and fatigue; and

WHEREAS, Lyme disease can be accompanied by other associated tick-borne diseases including, but not limited to, babesiosis, bartonella, ehrlichiosis, and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, which are serious co-infections; and

WHEREAS, Lyme disease can be treated with antibiotics if diagnosed early, but the disease often goes undetected or may be misdiagnosed because it mimics other illnesses; and

WHEREAS, untreated Lyme disease and associated diseases can have devastating consequences on people infected, such as severe heart, neurological, eye, and joint impairment, since the bacteria can affect many organs and dysregulates the immune system; and

WHEREAS, Lyme disease is the fastest growing vector-borne disease in the country; and

WHEREAS, in this State, the Division of Public Health has received reports of 189 cases of Lyme disease from 2000 to 2002; and

WHEREAS, actual cases of Lyme disease and associated diseases are estimated by the Federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention to be at least 10 times higher than reported because of the difficulty of diagnosis and/or misdiagnosis; and

WHEREAS, Lyme disease is often misdiagnosed because the current Lyme titer test has an accuracy rate of only 30 to 60%; the current Lyme titer and Western blot tests are antibody tests; and some people may not produce enough antibodies to be detected, for varying reasons; and

WHEREAS, Lyme disease can develop into a chronic condition when the bacteria enter the central nervous system; requiring the patient to undergo long-term treatment; and

WHEREAS, health care agencies and health insurers are often unaware of the long-term consequences of Lyme disease and the need for continued treatment coverage; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the State to establish a Task Force to study the extent and types of Lyme disease and associated tick-borne diseases in the State and the related problems caused by lack of diagnosis, misdiagnosis, and lack of insurance coverage for testing;

NOW, THEREFORE:

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the 142nd General Assembly, the House concurring therein, that a Task Force be created to make recommendations to address the prevalence of Lyme disease and associated tick-borne diseases in this state, identify where reported cases of Lyme disease are most prevalent, make recommendations for the prevention of Lyme disease and associated diseases, furnish proposals for educational programs to raise awareness about the long-term effects of the misdiagnosis of Lyme disease, and identify geographical areas where an educational program could be targeted.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Task Force shall not be limited in the scope of its study and is encouraged to make additional recommendations, if necessary, concerning the results of its study.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Task Force shall be composed of the following individuals appointed by the Senate Pro Tempore of the Delaware State Senate with the concurrence of the Speaker of the House:

-two physicians who are knowledgeable of, and whose practice includes the treatment of, both early and late stage Lyme disease;

-one physician or university immunology or research scientist with acknowledged expertise in spirochetes and related infectious diseases;

-the Director of the Division of Public Health, or designee;

-the State epidemiologist;

-the Director of the Division of Parks and Recreation, or designee;

-the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, or designee;

-two members of the State Lyme Support Group; and

-one member of the International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Task Force shall elect a chairperson from among its members.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Task Force shall submit a report of its findings to the General Assembly one year from the appointment of members to the Task Force.

SYNOPSIS

This Resolution creates a Task Force that is charged with examining the prevalence of Lyme disease and associated tick-borne diseases, to make recommendations for prevention, and to identify educational programs to increase public awareness of the effects of failure to diagnose Lyme disease. Lyme disease can be a chronic disease if not diagnosed and treated promptly. If treated promptly a person afflicted by Lyme disease and associated tick-borne diseases can lead a full, productive and pain-free life.

Author: Sen. Peterson

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