

Newtown, CT, May 29, 2009 – Patient groups across Connecticut and the nation were jubilant as the Connecticut Senate passed the Lyme disease doctor protection bill today, 36-0, following its unanimous passage in the Connecticut House of Representatives on April 30, 2009.

HB 6200 contains language that will protect CT licensed Lyme treating physicians from prosecution by the State of Connecticut Medical Examining Board solely on the basis of a clinical diagnosis and /or for treatment of long-term Lyme disease. The bill provides the definition for Lyme disease which includes “the presence in a patient of signs and symptoms compatible with acute infection with *Borrelia burgdorferi*; or with late stage or persistent or chronic infection with *Borrelia burgdorferi*, or with complications related to such an infection.” It also defines clinical diagnosis as determined by a physician “...that is based on knowledge obtained through the medical history and physical examination alone, or in conjunction with the testing that provides supportive data for such clinical diagnosis.” In addition, it provides for updating the Lyme disease definition if other strains are found to cause Lyme disease.

The final bill was the result of months of negotiations between Legislative Leaders, the Connecticut Department of Public Health and the undersigned patient Groups. According to Maggie Shaw, Newtown Lyme Disease Task Force, who has been spearheading the Connecticut effort, “Patients in Connecticut and their families will experience some relief as a result of the passage of this bill and Governor Rell’s hoped-for decision to sign it into law. Instead of having to drive for hours to other states, Connecticut residents may actually be able to receive treatment in the State for their debilitating symptoms, since the bill opens the door to a more friendly treatment climate for physicians.”

Pat Smith, president of the national Lyme Disease Association, who has been working with legislators in Hartford to secure passage, underscored the importance of the bill to patients everywhere: “This bill hits at the heart of the Lyme problem, recognizing chronic Lyme infection, long-term treatment of Lyme disease, and recognizing and defining clinical judgment by physicians. Legislators are to be commended for being knowledgeable about the problem, focusing on finding a solution acceptable to disparate groups, and taking action to make this bill a reality, a win-win for patients, doctors and the State itself.”

The Groups extend their appreciation to all the Senators, especially the sponsors. In particular, we thank Senator Jonathan Harris (CT-5), Co-Chair of the Joint Public Health Committee, and Senator Martin Looney (CT-11), Senate Majority Leader, who took time from their busy schedules prior to passage to meet with the Groups on the importance of the bill.

In the House, thanks go to Representatives Jason Bartlett, Kim Fawcett, Public Health Committee Co-Chair, Betsy Ritter, and Representatives Chris Lyddy, Peggy Reeves and all of the legislators who supported this bill. Passage in both houses would not have occurred without the support of patients, families and members of the Lyme community who wrote letters, made phone calls and testified in support of the bill and without the critical input and support of the Connecticut Medical Society. The International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society, which consists of Lyme treating physicians, also supported the bill.

The Groups have confidence that Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell will fulfill her commitment to Connecticut residents and quickly sign this important piece of legislation into law, which would make Connecticut the second state after RI to pass a specific Lyme disease protection bill. Representatives of the Groups met with the Governor’s office earlier this month.

For wording on the bill, please go to <http://www.cga.ct.gov/> **HB6200 (File # 903)**

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Newtown Lyme Disease Task Force
Ridgefield Lyme Disease Task Force
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