

THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE HERE TODAY. I AM JONATHAN GREER, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE INSURANCE FEDERATION OF PENNSYLVANIA. WE ARE A NON-PROFIT TRADE ASSOCIATION REPRESENTING COMMERCIAL INSURERS IN ALL LINES OF INSURANCE IN PENNSYLVANIA. OUR MEMBERS INCLUDE MANY OF THE LARGE NATIONAL HEALTH INSURERS AND SOME OF THE FEW REMAINING SMALL LOCAL HEALTH INSURERS. ON BEHALF OF THESE COMPANIES, WE APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK BEFORE YOU TODAY ON SENATE BILL 1199 DEALING WITH THE DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF LYME DISEASE.

I BRING TO THIS DISCUSSION THE UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE OF A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY WHO HAS ALSO BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH LYME DISEASE. THAT DIAGNOSIS OCCURRED IN JUNE OF LAST YEAR FOLLOWING THE MANIFESTATION OF CLASSIC SYMPTOMS - A RED, BULLS-EYE RASH ON THE BACK OF MY LEG, SEVERE FATIGUE, AND BODY ACHES. I CAN PERSONALLY ATTEST TO THE SEVERITY OF THIS ILLNESS AND THE NEED FOR AN ACCURATE DIAGNOSIS AND PROMPT MEDICAL TREATMENT. AND I UNDERSTAND THE LEVEL OF INTEREST SENATE BILL 1199 HAS STIRRED WITHIN THE ADVOCACY COMMUNITY.

HAVING SAID THAT, WE BELIEVE SENATE BILL 1199 IS A STEP IN THE WRONG DIRECTION: THE BILL TREADS ON DANGEROUS GROUND BY CALLING ON THE LEGISLATURE TO MANDATE COVERAGE FOR ANY PRESCRIBED TREATMENT OF LYME DISEASE THAT IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH A TREATING PHYSICIAN'S STANDARD OF CARE EVEN IF THIS STANDARD OF CARE IS NOT RECOGNIZED BY THE MAINSTREAM MEDICAL COMMUNITY. AS OUTLINED IN SECTION 7 (A)(2) OF THE BILL, WE UNDERSTAND THIS STANDARD OF CARE WOULD INCLUDE LONG TERM ANTIBIOTIC OR ANTIMICROBIAL TREATMENT FOR INDIVIDUALS DIAGNOSED WITH LYME DISEASE AND ITS SYMPTOMS.

THE BILL ALSO AFFORDS TREATING PHYSICIANS PROTECTION FROM CENSURE BY THE STATE BOARD OF MEDICINE AND THE STATE BOARD OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE. WE'RE NOT AWARE OF ANY SIMILAR PROTECTIONS GRANTED TO PHYSICIANS AND INCLUSION OF THIS LANGUAGE SERVES AS AN INDICATION OF THE CONTROVERSY BEHIND AND POTENTIAL HARM OF LONG TERM ANTIBIOTIC AND ANTIMICROBIAL TREATMENT. WE ALSO QUESTION HOW PATIENTS ARE WELL SERVED BY ALLOWING PHYSICIANS TO PURSUE A CONTROVERSIAL COURSE OF TREATMENT WITH IMPUNITY.

THE SCIENCE SURROUNDING THE USE OF LONG TERM ANTIBIOTIC AND ANTIMICROBIAL TREATMENT FOR CHRONIC SYMPTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH LYME DISEASE IS, AT BEST, MIXED. WELL REGARDED ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE MEDICAL COMMUNITY, INCLUDING THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE, HAVE FOUND THERE IS NO EMPIRICALLY BASED EVIDENCE SUGGESTING THE CHRONIC SYMPTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH LYME DISEASE IMPROVE WHEN PATIENTS ARE TREATED WITH PROLONGED ANTIBIOTICS AFTER ALREADY HAVING THE INITIAL COURSE OF TREATMENT.

SIMPLY PUT, THERE IS NO MAINSTREAM CONSENSUS WITHIN THE MEDICAL COMMUNITY THAT THIS FORM OF EXPERIMENTAL TREATMENT BENEFITS PATIENTS. AND SINCE LONG TERM EXPOSURE TO ANTIBIOTICS CAN PROVE HARMFUL TO PATIENTS, WE ASK YOU TO CONSIDER OTHER AVENUES TO ADDRESS THE SPREAD OF LYME DISEASE IN PENNSYLVANIA.

SO WHAT SHOULD WE BE DOING? WE BELIEVE THE BEST WAY TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS OF LYME DISEASE IS PREVENT PEOPLE FROM GETTING IT IN THE FIRST PLACE. GOING BACK TO MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH THIS ISSUE, LAST YEAR I FAILED TO TAKE THE

APPROPRIATE PRECAUTIONS WHEN WORKING OUTSIDE EVEN THOUGH I LIVE IN A WOODED AREA THAT IS ALSO HOME TO DEER. HAD I KNOWN, AS I DO NOW, THE ILLNESS I WAS EXPOSING MYSELF TO, I WOULD HAVE BEEN LESS CAVALIER AND WORN THE APPROPRIATE CLOTHING AND GENERALLY BEEN MORE CAREFUL. REST ASSURED, AFTER LAST YEAR'S EXPERIENCE, I NEVER WORK OUTSIDE WITHOUT FIRST TAKING THE NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS.

IN THIS SENSE, WE THINK THE CONCEPT OF CREATING A TASK FORCE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH THAT IS GEARED TOWARD PROMOTING PREVENTION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF LYME DISEASE IS AN IDEA WORTH EXPLORING. THIS CONCEPT IS ADDRESSED IN SECTION 5 OF THE BILL. WE'RE NOT SURE WHAT, IF ANYTHING, THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH DOES IN THIS REGARD NOW, THOUGH WE ARE HAPPY TO WORK WITH THIS COMMITTEE AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE COMMITTEE SHOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN PURSUING THIS IDEA FURTHER.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK BEFORE THE COMMITTEE AND I AM HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY OF YOUR QUESTIONS.

