

Month, day, year

Dear (Congressman/woman or Senator) _____,

As a concerned citizen and constituent of your district, I respectfully urge you co-sponsor the "Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases Prevention, Education, and Research Act of 2009" (H.R. 1179 / S. 1352).

This bill is important to Minnesotans because tick-borne disease is endemic here. In fact, Minnesota ranks 8th in the nation for Lyme disease cases. Our own state health department has estimated that as many as 1 in 3 adult deer ticks in Minnesota carry the Lyme disease bacteria. The CDC states that Lyme disease is still vastly underreported, with only 10% of cases that meet its surveillance criteria being recorded. That translates into more than a quarter of a million new cases of Lyme disease in the United States each year. In Minnesota, 1,282 cases were reported to the CDC in 2008. Due to underreporting, however, Minnesota likely had over 12,800 cases. At the highest risk of acquiring this horrible disease are our children, ages 5-14.

In humans, Lyme disease infection can cause early symptoms that include severe headaches, debilitating fatigue, joint pain, and skin rashes. Unfortunately, diagnostic testing for this disease is highly insensitive and often leads to false negative results. The two-tier testing criteria adopted by the CDC misses many patients suffering from Lyme disease. Many treating doctors believe these tests miss approximately 50 % or more of patients. As a result of a missed Lyme diagnosis, some untreated patients go on to develop severe central nervous system, heart, eye, joint, and musculoskeletal problems. These symptoms can become chronic and debilitating if the disease is not detected early. Further complicating diagnosis and treatment is the fact that other tick-borne diseases are capable of being transmitted through the same tick bite, including Babesiosis, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Southern Tick Associated Rash Illness (STARI), Ehrlichiosis, Anaplasmosis, Tularemia, and Bartonellosis.

Unfortunately, Minnesotans with Lyme and other tick-borne diseases are having difficulty getting diagnosed and properly treated. In addition to the problem of inaccurate diagnostic testing and underreporting, many physicians are not adequately educated in the diagnosis and treatment of these diseases. Many of them tend to follow rigid and one-sided treatment guidelines that are based on flawed and biased research.

[Optional: Add a short paragraph about your own experience with tick-borne disease here]

Minnesotans need this bill to pass because the medical resources available to help our family members, friends and neighbors with Lyme disease are far from adequate. This bill provides for research funding that could lead to the development of more accurate diagnostic testing. Additionally, it would support disease prevention efforts, open the door to unbiased treatment research, and establish physician and public education programs that draw on the full spectrum of scientific research and physician experience in diagnosing and treating these devastating diseases.

The long-term cost of Lyme disease to families, school systems, the health care system and the economy is astounding. Mothers and fathers are losing their jobs and their homes, and many seek disability because they cannot get treatment. The federal government is footing the bill for many of the chronic cases that slip through the cracks of the current system. Minnesotans are sick and we need to find real answers to this growing problem!

Please cosponsor H.R. 1179 / S. 1352 today and actively promote it to your colleagues. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this very important legislation.

Sincerely,

Your name

Street Address

City, State and Zip Code

Phone Number