
By: **Delegates Conway, Bozman, Cane, Elmore, Haddaway, Rudolph, Sossi,
and Walkup**

Introduced and read first time: February 11, 2005

Assigned to: Health and Government Operations

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Task Force to Study Lyme Disease**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing a Task Force to Study Lyme Disease; providing for
4 the membership, appointment, and staffing of the Task Force; requiring the
5 Task Force to study and make recommendations to the General Assembly, on or
6 before a certain date, on certain issues relating to Lyme disease; providing for
7 the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the establishment of a Task
8 Force to Study Lyme Disease.

9 **Preamble**

10 WHEREAS, The General Assembly recognizes the negative impact of Lyme
11 disease on Marylanders; and

12 WHEREAS, Lyme disease and related illnesses are posing a growing threat to
13 the health of Marylanders; and

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

16 WHEREAS, Citizens of Maryland diagnosed with chronic Lyme disease
17 experience great difficulty in being diagnosed and treated, thereby impairing their
18 access to medical care; and

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

22 WHEREAS, The prevention of Lyme disease and related illnesses is best
23 accomplished by a combination of public awareness, personal protection, and
24 environmental measures, and

25 WHEREAS, The difficulty of diagnosing individuals with long-term Lyme
26 disease and other tick-borne illnesses often impact patient outcomes; and

1 WHEREAS, Laboratory tests for Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses
2 are not definitive and consensus guidelines for diagnosis and treatment of long-term
3 Lyme disease have yet to be developed; and

4 WHEREAS, Untreated Lyme disease and associated diseases can have
5 devastating consequences on people infected, such as severe heart, neurological, eye,
6 and joint impairment, since the disease can affect many organs and the immune
7 system; and

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

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

13 WHEREAS, It is in the best interest of the State to establish a task force to
14 study the extent and types of Lyme disease and related illnesses in the State and the
15 problems associated with the lack of diagnosis, misdiagnosis, and the lack of
16 insurance coverage for testing; now, therefore,

17 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
18 MARYLAND, That:

19 (a) There is a Task Force to Study Lyme Disease.

20 (b) The Task Force consists of the following members:

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

23 (2) one physician or university immunology or research scientist with
24 acknowledged expertise in spirochetes and related infectious diseases;

25 (3) the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, or the Secretary's
26 designee;

27 (4) the State epidemiologist;

28 (5) the Secretary of Natural Resources, or the Secretary's designee;

29 (6) the Secretary of Agriculture, or the Secretary's designee;

30 (7) four representatives from Lyme disease support groups in the State;
31 and

32 (8) one member of the National Capital Lyme Association; and

33 (9) one member of the International Lyme and Associated Diseases
34 Society.

1 (c) The Secretary of the Health and Mental Hygiene shall appoint members of
2 the Task Force and designate a chair.

3 (d) The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene shall provide staff for the
4 Task Force.

5 (e) A member of the Task Force:

6 (1) may not receive compensation; but

7 (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State
8 Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

9 (f) The Task Force shall:

10 (1) study the prevalence of Lyme disease and associated tick-borne
11 illnesses, including identifying where reports of Lyme disease are most prevalent in
12 the State; and

13 (2) make recommendations relating to:

14 (i) the prevention of Lyme disease and associated tick-borne
15 illnesses;

16 (ii) educational programs to raise awareness about the long-term
17 effects of the misdiagnosis of Lyme disease, and where educational programs should
18 be targeted; and

19 (iii) any other issues of relevance to the prevention, diagnosis, and
20 treatment of Lyme disease.

21 (g) The Task Force shall report its findings and recommendations to the
22 General Assembly, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, on or
23 before July 1, 2006.

24 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
25 October 1, 2005. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and, at the end of
26 September 30, 2006, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this
27 Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.