



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

March 13, 2026

The Honorable Heather Bagnall
Chair, House Health Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 1375 – Health Insurance - Lyme Disease and Related Tick-Borne Illnesses - Long-Term Antibiotic Treatment – Letter of Opposition

Dear Chair Bagnall and Committee members:

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of opposition for House Bill (HB) 1375 – Health Insurance - Lyme Disease and Related Tick-Borne Illnesses - Long-Term Antibiotic Treatment. HB 1375 would require certain insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations to provide coverage for the full length of long-term antibiotic treatment of Lyme disease and related tick-borne illnesses.

While antibiotics are crucial for treating many conditions, unnecessary antibiotic use provides no patient benefit and increases the risk of adverse events according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).¹ Research has shown that long-term antibiotic treatment, particularly treatment with long-term intravenous antibiotics, does not improve long-term outcomes for patients diagnosed with chronic Lyme Disease.² A 2017 CDC report also provides examples of severe complications that occurred in patients who received long-term antibiotic treatment because of a diagnosis of chronic Lyme disease.³ These complications include cases of septic shock, osteomyelitis (inflammation or swelling that occurs in the bone), *Clostridium difficile* colitis (inflammation of the colon), and other serious and sometimes life-threatening complications. Finally, a 2018 study using a large medical and pharmacy claims database found that extended use of antibiotics for Post-Lyme Disease Syndrome was associated with increases

¹ Antibiotic Use and Antimicrobial Resistance Facts. (2024). Antibiotic Prescribing and Use; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/data-research/facts-stats/index.html>

² Berende, A., ter Hofstede, H. J. M., Vos, F. J., van Middendorp, H., Vogelaar, M. L., Tromp, M., van den Hoogen, F. H., Donders, A. R. T., Evers, A. W. M., & Kullberg, B. J. (2016). Randomized Trial of Longer-Term Therapy for Symptoms Attributed to Lyme Disease. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 374(13), 1209–1220. <https://doi.org/10.1056/nejmoa1505425>

³ Marzec, N. S., Nelson, C., Waldron, P. R., Blackburn, B. G., Hosain, S., Greenhow, T., Green, G. M., Lomen-Hoerth, C., Golden, M., & Mead, P. S. (2017). Serious Bacterial Infections Acquired During Treatment of Patients Given a Diagnosis of Chronic Lyme Disease — United States. *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 66(23), 607–609. <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6623a3>

in the incidence of hospitalizations, emergency department visits, infections, and electrolyte imbalance.⁴

In an effort to improve patient safety and mitigate poor outcomes, antimicrobial stewardship programs (ASPs), operating internationally, nationally, and locally, are evaluating and improving the ways antibiotics are both prescribed by clinicians and used by patients.⁵ ASPs ensure that antibiotics are used only when necessary and appropriate. The Department promulgates national ASP guidance regarding prescribing appropriate antibiotics for the appropriate duration according to the most recent evidence-based guidance provided by Infectious Diseases Society of America, American Academy of Neurology, and American College of Rheumatology. Long-term antibiotic treatment of Lyme disease and related tick-borne illnesses runs counter to this evidence-based guidance.

For these reasons, the Department respectfully opposes HB 1375. If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Meghan Lynch, Director of Governmental Affairs at meghan.lynch@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Meena Seshamani', is positioned above the typed name.

Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D.
Secretary of Health

⁴ Goodlet, K. J., & Fairman, K. A. (2018). Adverse Events Associated With Antibiotics and Intravenous Therapies for Post-Lyme Disease Syndrome in a Commercially Insured Sample. *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/civ329>

⁵ Core Elements of Antibiotic Stewardship. (2024, June 10). Antibiotic Prescribing and Use; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/hcp/core-elements/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fantibiotic-use%2Fcore-elements%2Findex.html