

Testimony IN SUPPORT For

LD 906: An Act to Ensure Physicians Receive Full Diagnostic Test Data Concerning Tick-borne Diseases

March 22, 2023

Good afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Malorie Rich and I have Lyme disease and several coinfections as a result of a tick bite. I am here today providing testimony in support of **LD 906: An Act to Ensure Physicians Receive Full Diagnostic Test Data Concerning Tick-borne Diseases.**

LD 906 would require a medical laboratory to provide all the specific raw data used to determine the results of a diagnostic test for tick-borne diseases. With rising case numbers, it is important that we look to do anything and everything we can to try to prevent systemic Lyme which means diagnosis and treatment as soon as possible. An interpreted test result without this information being delivered is not currently providing our medical practitioners with all of the available data to properly diagnose.

Lyme disease is an illness caused by borrelia bacteria that is spread through tick bites. Many will not even notice when they've been bitten by a tick. Lyme is known as "the great imitator" because its symptoms can mimic many other diseases and can affect any organ of the body, including the brain and nervous system, muscles, joints and the heart. The symptoms of Lyme may vary, but early symptoms usually occur within the first 30 days after a bite. Without treatment it can become chronic, which is often more serious and widespread.

An early diagnosis and treatment from receiving this complete test data could save lives. Stopping systemic Lyme disease can greatly improve patient's outcomes and prevent devastating impacts on lives, which is the cost that many pay from a delayed diagnosis, including myself.

I was an active, healthy, busy Mom when I developed over 40 symptoms and became bedridden while searching for answers before I received my diagnosis; but by then I was already chronic. I will never get back the years that I have lost to Lyme. Had my doctor been adequately informed by receiving the raw data of my lab results, I may have been alleviated from years of suffering and my life could have been different. But as my symptoms persisted, so did my fight. And that is why I am able to stand here and speak to you today and will continue to be an advocate for the Lyme Community.

My case is not singular. Ticks live among us in Maine, which means you are at risk. Lyme strikes fast and most people don't even realize they have been bit. Thousands of Maine people are dealing with chronic Lyme symptoms that could be prevented. One day you are fine and the next day you can't even get out of bed for days, weeks, or months. Your doctor can only diagnose based off what information they are provided. Over the past 3 years I have been working endlessly just to be able to hold my job, raise my daughters and not be another depressing Lyme story. Wouldn't you want your doctor to have all the possible information available to them in order to provide a proper diagnosis?