

HOUSE No. 4559

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts



CHARLES D. BAKER
GOVERNOR

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COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
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KARYN POLITO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

July 28, 2016

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives,

I am returning to you unsigned H. 4491, “An Act Relative to Long-Term Antibiotic Therapy for the Treatment of Lyme Disease,” because the proposed legislation requires insurers and other health care payors to cover the costs of unproven and potentially unsafe treatments for Lyme disease.

The Act requires private health insurance companies, nonprofit hospital service corporations, medical service corporations, and health maintenance organizations to cover the costs of long-term antibiotic therapies and off-label uses of other drugs to treat Lyme disease when deemed medically necessary by a treating physician.

I support comprehensive coverage and access to Lyme disease treatment. There is considerable uncertainty in the medical community, however, as to the clinical effectiveness and the safety of long-term antibiotic therapies to treat this illness. Further, requiring coverage of experimental drugs for off-label use sets a concerning precedent. We should only be mandating coverage for evidence-based therapies that have proven to be clinically effective, whether we are considering the treatment of Lyme disease or any other medical disease or condition.

My objections to the proposed legislation should not be mistaken for a lack of concern that persons suffering from Lyme disease receive access to proper medical treatment. Accordingly, I am filing today a bill that requires private health insurance companies, nonprofit hospital service corporations, medical service corporations, and health maintenance

organizations to cover comprehensive and medically appropriate treatment for Lyme disease. The bill requires that these entities provide coverage for Lyme disease treatment equal to the coverage that MassHealth now provides to its members. In doing so, the bill will eliminate any arbitrary restrictions on coverage and ensure that persons needing treatment for Lyme disease have access to safe, effective, and clinically recognized treatments.

For the foregoing reasons, I am returning this bill to you unsigned.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles D. Baker,
Governor

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**In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court
(2015-2016)**

An Act relative to long-term antibiotic therapy for the treatment of Lyme Disease.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 .