

House Bill 578 – Representative Creech Sponsor Testimony

Chairman Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 578. I am proud to sponsor this bill along with Representative Schmidt.

House Bill 578 updates Ohio law to require the reporting of tick-related diseases and conditions, including Alpha-gal Syndrome, Lyme disease, Babesiosis, Ehrlichiosis, and others, to the Ohio Department of Health. This bill simply adds these conditions to the list of diseases already reportable under section 3701.23 of the Ohio Revised Code.

This legislation is needed because tick-related illnesses are becoming increasingly more common in Ohio, and we lack reliable statewide data on the subject. **Alpha-gal Syndrome**, in particular, is one illness becoming more common across Ohio especially in our southern counties. It is caused by a Lone Star tick bite and can lead to severe allergic reactions to red meat and in extreme cases can lead to sudden death as we saw recently with a patient who had AGS in New Jersey after he ate a hamburger. Many patients struggle to get a diagnosis because providers are not always familiar with the condition. CDC mapping shows AGS-related indicators rising across large portions of the country, including here in Ohio.

I also would like to mention to the committee that this bill began with a constituent from my district Mr. Robert Worley who is here with us today in committee. Mr. Worley reached out to me after his own difficult experience trying to obtain answers about Alpha-gal Syndrome. Their situation highlighted the need for better reporting so patients, families, and healthcare providers can understand what is happening in our communities.

HB 578 is simple, straightforward, and not burdensome. It does not create new testing or treatment requirements. It simply uses the existing reporting system to ensure Ohio has accurate information about tick-related diseases.

Members, this is a practical public-health measure driven by real concerns from Ohioans. Better data will help us respond earlier, educate the public, and support those affected.

I respectfully ask for your support of HB 578, and I am happy to take any questions you may have at this time.