

Ward proposal aims to provide options for sufferers of Lyme disease

ST. PAUL - Legislation authored by State Rep. John Ward that will offer options to patients with Lyme disease was heard before the House Health Care and Human Services Policy and Oversight Committee last week.

H.F. 2597 would allow physicians to appropriately treat Lyme patients without fear of reprisal from the state medical board. Rep. Ward spoke before the committee, laying out the obstacles to care faced by Lyme sufferers, and why this legislation is needed.

"Lyme disease is still a relatively new disease and no one protocol has been proven to be the only effective treatment," said Ward. "Every one of us, as well as our loved ones, are just a tick bite away from having to deal with the ravages of Lyme disease; we need adequate health care options."

Specifically, the legislation would limit the Board of Medical Practice from bringing a disciplinary action against a physician for prescribing, administering, or dispensing long-term antibiotic therapy for chronic Lyme disease.

Rep. Ward said he is working with the medical board and a representative of the Minnesota Lyme Action Support Group on an agreement that would eliminate the need for legislative action, and moved to "lay over" the vote of the bill until after such an agreement could be voted on by the board.

"Hundreds of people suffer needlessly either due to misdiagnosis of Lyme disease, or once diagnosed, the wrong treatment," said Ward. "We need to remove the barriers to successful diagnosis and treatment, and let people suffering from Lyme Disease have a full say in their recovery process."