Providing for continuing education in Lyme disease and related tick-borne diseases for health care professionals.

The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

(1) In the last six years, this Commonwealth ranked highest in the country in the number of confirmed cases of Lyme disease and in 2016, reported 12,200 new cases of Lyme disease.

(2) The Department of Environmental Protection published a study in 2015 that confirmed a high risk of Lyme disease in every county of this Commonwealth and found all 67 counties had the blacklegged tick.

(3) The early clinical diagnosis and appropriate treatment of these tick-borne disorders and diseases can greatly reduce the risks of continued, diverse and chronic symptoms that can affect every system and organ of the human body and often every aspect of an individual's life.

(4) Approximately 10% to 40% of Lyme disease patients
may go on to suffer from a complex, chronic disease which is much more difficult to treat.

(5) There are multiple diagnostic and treatment guidelines for diagnosis and treatment of Lyme disease and tick-borne illness.

(6) Residents of this Commonwealth should be aware of early disseminated and persistent symptoms and should know that a negative Lyme test cannot rule out Lyme disease.

(7) Scientific understanding of these complex tick-borne illnesses is expected to evolve rapidly in the next decade, including diagnosis and treatment options.

(8) The high burden of tick-borne diseases in this Commonwealth requires an urgent and ongoing response. Health care practitioner education is a specific strategy recommended.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Short title.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Lyme Disease and Related Tick-Borne Disease Continuing Education Act.

Section 2. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this act shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Licensee." A physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner.

"Licensing board." The State Board of Medicine or the State Board of Nursing.

"Lyme disease." Signs or symptoms compatible with acute, late-stage, persistent infection with Borrelia burgdorferi or
complications related to the infection or with other strains of Borrelia, including, but not limited to, B. miyamotoi, B. mayonii, B. garinii and B. afzelii, that are recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a cause of Lyme disease. The term includes infection that meets the surveillance criteria established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other acute and persistent manifestations of the infection as determined by a health care practitioner.

"Related tick-borne disease." The presence of signs or symptoms compatible with infection with bartonella, babesiosis/piroplasmosis, anaplasmosis, ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, rickettsiosis, Powassan or other tick-transmissible illness or complications related to the infections. The term does not include Lyme disease.

Section 3. Continuing education requirement.

(a) General rule.--A licensing board shall require that a licensee complete at least two hours of continuing education in the assessment and diagnosis of and treatment options for Lyme disease and other related tick-borne diseases as a portion of the total continuing education required for license renewal.

(b) Content.--A licensing board shall establish the content of continuing medical education required under this section. The content shall address, at a minimum, the most current, evidence-based research on tick data/pathogens Statewide, patient profile and symptom presentation in regards to assessment and diagnosis, current diagnostic options and current treatment options and prevention.

(c) Input.--In establishing the content required for continuing medical education required under this section, the licensing board shall seek input from persons with knowledge...
about Lyme disease or related tick-borne diseases, including, but not limited to, universities involved in the research of Lyme disease and related tick-borne diseases. To ensure quality and balanced medical education, the licensing board shall take into consideration the philosophies of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the guidelines established by the National Institutes of Health, International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society and the Infectious Diseases Society of America, as well as the latest scientific evidence and research.

Section 4. Construction.

Nothing in this act shall be construed to provide treatment recommendations for Lyme disease or related tick-borne disease.

Section 5. Regulations.

The licensing board shall promulgate regulations necessary to effectuate this act no later than 18 months from the effective date of this section.

Section 6. Expiration.

This act shall expire December 31, 2023.

Section 7. Effective date.

This act shall take effect immediately.