



Public Hearing: Ticked Off - Increasing Pennsylvanians' Awareness of Tick-Borne Diseases

The purpose of this hearing is to examine the rise of tick-borne diseases in Pennsylvania and how the legislature can promote access, awareness, and education surrounding this public health crisis.

September 2, 2026 | 10:00 a.m.

Hearing Overview

- **Pledge of Allegiance**
- **Welcome**
- **Opening Remarks**
 - Chairman David H. Rowe
 - State Representative Catherine Wallen
- **Testimony from Invited Experts**
- **Member Discussion with Testifiers**
- **Closing Comments & Adjournment**

Testifiers

- **Dr. Erika Machtinger**, Extension Educator for the Vector-borne Disease Team, Penn State Extension
- **Kaitlyn Goode**, Data Visualization Specialist, Center for Rural Pennsylvania
- **Dr. Nicole Chinnici**, Director, PA Tick Research Lab at East Stroudsburg University
- **Kami Noel**, Mother of Child with Lyme
- **Dr. Rebecca Speelman**, Patient with Lyme

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Chairman David H. Rowe
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About the Testifiers



Dr. Erika Machtinger

Dr. Erika Machtinger serves as an Extension Educator with the Vector-Borne Diseases Team at Penn State Extension, where she works to translate research and scientific knowledge into practical information for communities, agricultural professionals, and the public. Her work focuses on vector-borne diseases, including the biology, ecology, and management of ticks and other disease-carrying vectors. Through education and outreach, Dr. Machtinger helps Pennsylvanians better understand vector-borne disease risks and strategies for prevention and control.



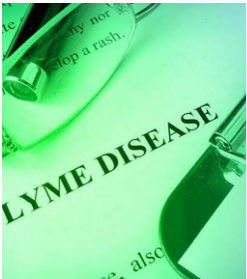
Kaitlyn Goode

Kaitlyn Goode serves as a Data Visualization Specialist with the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, where she helps transform complex data and research into clear, accessible visualizations that support informed decision-making. Her work contributes to the Center's efforts to provide policymakers, community leaders, and the public with data-driven insights into the issues and trends shaping Pennsylvania's rural communities.



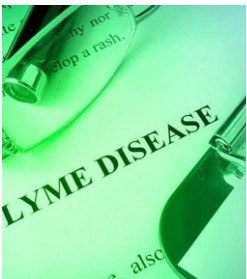
Dr. Nicole Chinnici

Dr. Nicole Chinnici serves as Director of the PA Tick Research Lab at East Stroudsburg University and Laboratory Director of the university's Dr. Jane Huffman Wildlife Genetics Institute. She has extensive experience in tick testing, molecular diagnostics, and vector-borne disease research, with a particular focus on identifying pathogens carried by ticks. Dr. Chinnici began her work in tick-borne disease research as a graduate student at ESU and has helped establish the university as a nationally recognized center for tick testing and research.



Kami Noel

Kami Noel is a Pennsylvania mother and advocate whose family's experience with Lyme disease has given her a personal perspective on the challenges faced by children and families affected by tick-borne illness. Through sharing her child's experience, Noel brings a parent's voice to discussions about Lyme disease awareness, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention. Her firsthand experience highlights the importance of continued research, education, and support for Pennsylvania families dealing with tick-borne diseases.



Dr. Rebecca Speelman

Dr. Rebecca Speelman is a former Pennsylvanian who recently moved to Texas because the climate relieves some of the pain associated with her Lyme Disease. By sharing her experience she pushes for greater awareness of Lyme, and other tick-borne diseases, in the hopes that the state will help increase the recognition and treatment of this disease.