

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION

No. 19

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

214th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 4, 2010

Sponsored by:

Senator CHRISTOPHER J. CONNORS
District 9 (Atlantic, Burlington and Ocean)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senator Beck

SYNOPSIS

Designates September of each year as “Chiari Malformation-Syringomyelia Awareness Month.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 10/1/2010)

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- 1 **A JOINT RESOLUTION** designating September of each year as
2 “Chiari Malformation-Syringomyelia Awareness Month.”
3
- 4 **WHEREAS**, Syringomyelia (SM) is a generic term referring to a
5 disorder in which a cyst or cavity forms within the spinal cord
6 which can expand and elongate over time, destroying the spinal
7 cord. Generally there are two forms of syringomyelia; the first
8 major form relates to an abnormality of the brain called a chiari
9 malformation (CM), named after the physicians who first
10 characterized it; and
- 11 **WHEREAS**, CM is a structural defect in the cerebellum, the part of the
12 brain that controls balance. Normally the cerebellum and parts of
13 the brainstem sit in an indented space at the lower rear of the skull,
14 above the foramen magnum which is a funnel-like opening to the
15 spinal canal. When part of the cerebellum is located below the
16 foramen magnum, it is called a CM; and
- 17 **WHEREAS**, CM may develop when the bony space is smaller than
18 normal, causing the cerebellum and the brainstem to be pushed
19 downward into the foramen magnum and into the upper spinal
20 canal. The resulting pressure on the cerebellum and brainstem may
21 affect functions controlled by these areas and block the flow of
22 cerebrospinal fluid, the clear liquid that surrounds and cushions the
23 brain and spinal cord, to and from the brain; and
- 24 **WHEREAS**, CM has several different causes. It can be caused by
25 structural defects in the brain and spinal cord that occur during fetal
26 development, or it can be caused later in life if spinal fluid is
27 drained excessively from the lumbar or thoracic areas of the spine
28 either due to injury, exposure to harmful substances, or infection;
29 and
- 30 **WHEREAS**, Since the advent of magnetic resonance imaging, diagnosis
31 of CM has risen dramatically. It is estimated that approximately
32 one in 1,200 people have CM. The average age of diagnosis is
33 about 24 years of age, and is more common in women. According
34 to the American Syringomyelia Alliance Project, Inc.,
35 approximately 800 people in New Jersey are diagnosed with CM;
36 and
- 37 **WHEREAS**, While many people with CM experience no symptoms,
38 when symptoms are present, they usually do not appear until
39 adolescence or early adulthood, but can occasionally be seen in
40 young children. The majority of patients complain of severe head
41 and neck pain. Patients may also complain of dizziness, vertigo,
42 disequilibrium, muscle weakness, balance problems, vision
43 impairment, or hearing problems. Often fine motor skills and hand
44 coordination are affected; and
- 45 **WHEREAS**, Medications may ease certain pain symptoms; however,
46 surgery is the only treatment available to correct functional
47 disturbances or halt the progression of damage to the central

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1 nervous system. More than one surgery may be needed to treat the
2 condition; and

3 **WHEREAS**, An increased awareness of CM/SM in society is essential
4 to ensure the safety and well-being of people with CM/SM and their
5 related disorders; and

6 **WHEREAS**, CM/SM needs to become a household name. Increased
7 awareness would allow medical professionals, employers, and the
8 public-at-large to be more understanding of CM/SM and the
9 abilities and limitations of those suffering from CM/SM so that
10 reasonable accommodations may be made; and

11 **WHEREAS**, It is appropriate that all citizens of the State of New Jersey
12 be better informed about CM/SM and its impact; now, therefore,

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14 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the*
15 *State of New Jersey:*

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17 1. September of each year is designated as “Chiari
18 Malformation-Syringomyelia Awareness Month” in the State of
19 New Jersey, and the citizens of New Jersey are urged to observe the
20 month with appropriate activities and programs.

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22 2. The Governor is respectfully requested to annually issue a
23 proclamation calling upon public officials and the citizens of New
24 Jersey to observe the month with appropriate activities and
25 programs.

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27 3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

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30 **STATEMENT**

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32 This joint resolution designates September of each year as
33 “Chiari Malformation-Syringomyelia Awareness Month” in New
34 Jersey to increase awareness of this little-known condition.

35 The joint resolution respectfully requests the Governor to
36 annually issue a proclamation recognizing September as “Chiari
37 Malformation-Syringomyelia Awareness Month” in New Jersey and
38 calls upon public officials and the citizens of New Jersey to observe
39 the month with appropriate activities and programs.