

JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 16

A JOINT RESOLUTION permanently designating October 6 as “Knock Out Opioid Abuse Day” in New Jersey.

WHEREAS, Opioids are commonly prescribed for pain, and an estimated 20 percent of patients presenting to physician offices with non-cancer pain symptoms, pain-related diagnoses, or acute and chronic pain receive an opioid prescription; and

WHEREAS, In 2012, health care providers wrote 259 million prescriptions for opioid pain medication, enough for every adult in the United States to have a bottle of pain medication pills; and

WHEREAS, Although evidence supports the short-term efficacy of opioids for reducing pain, few studies have been conducted to assess the long-term benefits of opioids for chronic pain; and

WHEREAS, Despite the benefits of opioid pain medication, opioid use presents serious risks, including the risk of opioid overdose, misuse, and abuse; and

WHEREAS, According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the abuse of prescription painkillers is a “growing, deadly epidemic”; and

WHEREAS, Since 1990, drug overdose death rates in the United States have more than tripled, with nearly three-fourths of these deaths attributable to prescription painkillers; and

WHEREAS, The unprecedented rise in overdose deaths in the U.S. parallels a nearly 300 percent increase in the sale of opioid pain medications, such as Oxycodone and Percocet, since 1999; and

WHEREAS, The chemical structure of opioids mimic the structure of receptors in the brain and the nervous system; and

WHEREAS, This chemical “relationship” allows prescription pain relievers to work by binding to receptors in the brain and decreasing the perception of pain, thereby creating a powerful feeling of euphoria, physical dependence, and in some cases, addiction; and

WHEREAS, The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports that many people who become addicted to opioids go on to abuse heroin, a semi-synthetic opioid drug; and

WHEREAS, Ninety-four percent of respondents in a 2014 survey of people in treatment for opioid addiction reported they chose to use heroin because prescription opioids were far more expensive to purchase and harder to obtain than heroin on the illegal drug market; and

WHEREAS, Of the 21.5 million Americans that had a substance abuse disorder in 2014, 1.9 million abused opioid pain medication and 586,000 had a substance abuse disorder involving heroin; and

WHEREAS, The abuse of prescription painkillers in New Jersey has led to a resurgence in the availability of cheap heroin in the State’s urban, suburban, and rural areas; and

WHEREAS, In 2014, according to data released by the Division of Criminal Justice in the Department of Law and Public Safety, there were 741 heroin related overdose deaths in New Jersey, twice as many as in 2010; and

WHEREAS, As reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, New Jersey’s per capita rate of 8.3 heroin related deaths per 100,000 is more than triple the national rate; and

WHEREAS, In 2014, 28,332 people entered New Jersey drug addiction treatment centers for heroin or opioid pill addictions, representing nearly half the overall total of 64,766 people who received substance abuse treatment in the State that year; and

WHEREAS, Heroin overdose has eclipsed homicide, suicide, car accidents, and HIV/AIDS as one of the leading causes of death in the State of New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, The Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey, in cooperation with the Community Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Morris, the Governor’s Council on Alcoholism and Drug

Abuse, and the Department of Human Services, has designated October 6, 2016 as “Knock Out Opioid Abuse Day” in New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, “Knock Out Opioid Abuse Day” is designed to raise awareness about the dangers of, and the link between, opioid abuse and heroin addiction and to educate health care providers, community leaders, State lawmakers, and members of the public about the opioid abuse epidemic and its effects throughout the State of New Jersey and across the country; and

WHEREAS, In order to improve public awareness of the dangers of opioid addiction and the link between opioid addiction and heroin use, it is both reasonable and appropriate to invite New Jersey citizens to observe “Knock Out Opioid Abuse Day” in this State, and to participate in appropriate activities in relation thereto; now, therefore,

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

C.36:2-367 “Knock Out Opioid Abuse Day,” October 6; designated.

1. October 6 shall be permanently designated as “Knock Out Opioid Abuse Day” in New Jersey in order to raise awareness about the dangers of, and the link between, opioid abuse and heroin addiction and to educate health care providers, community leaders, State lawmakers, and members of the public about the opioid abuse epidemic and its effects throughout the State of New Jersey and across the country.

C.36:2-368 Annual observance.

2. The Governor is respectfully requested to annually issue a proclamation recognizing October 6 as “Knock Out Opioid Abuse Day” in New Jersey, and calling upon public officials and the citizens of this State to observe the day with appropriate activities and programs.

3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

Approved July 15, 2019.