

[Passed Both Houses]

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION No. 58

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED DECEMBER 1, 1997

**By Senator BASSANO, Assemblywoman Vandervalk
and Assemblyman Blee**

- 1 **A JOINT RESOLUTION** designating the month of March in each year
2 as "Hepatitis C Awareness Month."
3
- 4 **WHEREAS**, The hepatitis C virus is a largely symptomless, blood-
5 borne virus which slowly attacks the liver and causes such liver
6 diseases as cirrhosis and cancer of the liver; and
- 7 **WHEREAS**, Over four million Americans are currently infected with
8 chronic viral hepatitis C, with 150,000 new cases of infection
9 occurring each year in the United States; and
- 10 **WHEREAS**, Some 10,000 persons die each year due to hepatitis C,
11 which is the leading cause of liver transplantation in the United
12 States and thereby factors into the shortage of healthy organs
13 available for transplantation; and
- 14 **WHEREAS**, The death rate from hepatitis C in the United States will
15 soon exceed that from HIV, the virus which is the probable
16 causative agent of AIDS; and
- 17 **WHEREAS**, Unwitting carriers of the hepatitis C virus may
18 unintentionally endanger themselves and infect others through
19 otherwise harmless behaviors; and
- 20 **WHEREAS**, Treatment of the hepatitis C virus is most efficacious if
21 the virus is caught early before the onset of liver disease; and
- 22 **WHEREAS**, It is estimated that approximately 144,000 New Jersey
23 residents are infected with the hepatitis C virus; however, the
24 federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not require
25 the State to report chronic hepatitis C infection, and, therefore, the
26 true extent of hepatitis C infection in New Jersey is unknown; and
- 27 **WHEREAS**, The National Institutes of Health Consensus Conference
28 on Hepatitis C recognized the emerging public health issue of
29 hepatitis C and recommended an increased effort to promote
30 education and public awareness by the public health community;
31 and
- 32 **WHEREAS**, The United States Public Health Service Blood Advisory
33 Committee has recognized the public health consequences of

1 undiagnosed hepatitis C infection and recommended that a massive
2 public health campaign be undertaken to notify all recipients of
3 blood transfusions prior to 1992 to obtain a test for hepatitis C; and
4 **WHEREAS**, The Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists has
5 recommended that a federal pilot project be made available to state
6 health departments for state and county surveillance activities to
7 identify and investigate cases of acute and chronic hepatitis C and
8 for the development of state-based educational programs including
9 the dissemination of materials on identification, reporting and
10 counseling to public health and health care professionals and the
11 general public, including high-risk groups; and
12 **WHEREAS**, In the absence of a vaccine for this serious epidemic
13 illness, emphasis must be placed on other means of disease
14 prevention such as research, education, screening - especially
15 targeted screening of high-risk New Jersey residents, and treatment;
16 now, therefore,

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

- 20
21 1. The month of March in each year is designated as "Hepatitis C
22 Awareness Month" in the State of New Jersey.
23
24 2. The Department of Health and Senior Citizens and all other
25 public and private entities entrusted with the health of the citizens of
26 this State are urged to determine the prevalence of hepatitis C in the
27 general population and to implement education programs for the
28 general public and health care professionals in the prevalence,
29 prevention, screening - especially targeted screening of high-risk New
30 Jersey residents, and treatment of this disease.
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32 3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.
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35 **STATEMENT**
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37 This joint resolution designates the month of March in each year as
38 "Hepatitis C Awareness Month" in the State of New Jersey. The joint
39 resolution also urges the Department of Health and Senior Citizens
40 and all other public and private entities entrusted with the health of the
41 citizens of New Jersey to determine the prevalence of hepatitis C in the
42 general population and to implement education programs for the
43 general public and health care professionals in the prevalence,
44 prevention, screening - especially targeted screening of high-risk New
45 Jersey residents, and treatment of this disease.

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3 Designates March as "Hepatitis C Awareness Month."