

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION

No. 126

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 25, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman STERLEY S. STANLEY

District 18 (Middlesex)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttie

SYNOPSIS

Designates October of each year as “Opioid Abuse Prevention Month.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 1/27/2021)

1 **A JOINT RESOLUTION** designating October of each year as “Opioid
2 Abuse Prevention Month” in New Jersey.
3

4 **WHEREAS**, According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and
5 Prevention, abuse of prescription painkillers, also called opioid pain
6 relievers, is a “growing, deadly epidemic”; and
7 **WHEREAS**, Since 1990, drug overdose death rates in the United States
8 have more than tripled, with nearly three-fourths of these deaths
9 attributable to prescription painkillers; and
10 **WHEREAS**, The unprecedented rise in overdose deaths in the U.S.
11 parallels a nearly 300 percent increase in the sale of opioid pain
12 relievers, such as Oxycodone and Percocet, since 1999; and
13 **WHEREAS**, Prescription painkillers work by binding to receptors in the
14 brain to decrease the perception of pain, thereby creating a powerful
15 feeling of euphoria, physical dependence, and in some cases,
16 addiction; and
17 **WHEREAS**, The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
18 Administration reports that many people who begin their drug use
19 with prescription painkillers go on to use heroin, a highly
20 dangerous, semi-synthetic opioid drug; and
21 **WHEREAS**, The switch from opioid pain relievers to heroin often
22 comes when users are struggling with withdrawal and requiring
23 higher doses to ease their symptoms, but can no longer afford to
24 purchase prescription painkillers, which are far more expensive on
25 the illegal drug market; and
26 **WHEREAS**, Between 2007 and 2012, the number of people reporting
27 heroin use in the U.S. increased from 373,000 to 669,000, with
28 nearly 80 percent of heroin users reporting previous prescription
29 painkiller abuse; and
30 **WHEREAS**, The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration reports that
31 two in five teenagers mistakenly believe prescription drugs are
32 “much safer” than illegal drugs, and three in 10 teens mistakenly
33 believe prescription pain killers are not addictive; and
34 **WHEREAS**, The State Commission of Investigation (SCI) recently
35 reported that New Jersey is in the midst of this prescription pill and
36 heroin epidemic; and
37 **WHEREAS**, According to that report, between 2006 and 2011, the
38 number of individuals who entered New Jersey drug addiction
39 treatment centers for opioid pill addictions tripled, from 2,700 to
40 8,600, with roughly half age 25 or younger; and
41 **WHEREAS**, During that same time, the number of people admitted for
42 heroin addiction jumped by one-third for those under age 25 to
43 more than 6,600; and
44 **WHEREAS**, In 2011, there were 337 mixed-drug deaths involving
45 Oxycodone, a 38 percent increase from 2010, and 368 mixed drug
46 deaths involving heroin, a 28 percent increase from 2010; and

1 **WHEREAS**, The SCI reported that abuse of prescription painkillers has
2 triggered a resurgence in the availability of cheap heroin in urban,
3 suburban, and rural areas of New Jersey; and
4 **WHEREAS**, The rise in opioid addiction has also led to a growing
5 number of robberies, assaults, and thefts in the State, which, in turn,
6 has required law enforcement to devote increasing resources to this
7 epidemic; and
8 **WHEREAS**, According to the Drug Policy Alliance, the State is also
9 facing a public health crisis due to the spread of HIV and hepatitis
10 C among heroin and other drug users; and
11 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey currently has the 5th highest adult HIV rate in
12 the country, the 3rd highest pediatric HIV rate in the country, and
13 the highest proportion of women infected with HIV/AIDS in the
14 country, with 45 percent of all infections attributable to the sharing
15 of infected syringes; and
16 **WHEREAS**, The overall cost of pervasive opioid abuse in New Jersey
17 is immeasurable: lives are lost, families destroyed, human potential
18 wasted, and society diminished; and
19 **WHEREAS**, In order to effectively address this issue, greater
20 recognition of the dangers of opioid abuse is needed among
21 lawmakers, law enforcement officials, parents, community leaders,
22 and all residents of the State; now, therefore,

23
24 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the*
25 *State of New Jersey:*

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27 1. The month of October each year shall be designated as
28 “Opioid Abuse Prevention Month” to promote ongoing education
29 about the signs and consequences of opioid abuse, to recognize and
30 advance efforts to end opioid abuse and promote rehabilitation and
31 recovery for abusers, and to encourage support for those who suffer
32 the effects of opioid abuse throughout the State of New Jersey and
33 across the country.

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35 2. The Governor shall annually issue a proclamation
36 recognizing October as “Opioid Abuse Prevention Month” in New
37 Jersey and shall call upon public officials and the citizens of this
38 State to observe the month with appropriate activities and programs.

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40 3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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45 This joint resolution designates October of each year as “Opioid
46 Abuse Prevention Month” in order to promote ongoing education
47 about opioid abuse, recognize and advance efforts to end this

1 epidemic, and encourage support for those who suffer the effects of
2 opioid abuse.

3 According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and
4 Prevention, abuse of prescription painkillers, also called opioid pain
5 relievers, is a “growing, deadly epidemic.” Since 1990, drug
6 overdose death rates in the U.S. have more than tripled, with nearly
7 three-fourths of these deaths attributable to prescription painkillers.
8 This unprecedented rise in overdose deaths parallels a nearly 300
9 percent increase in the sale of opioid pain relievers, such as
10 Oxycodone and Percocet, since 1999. Reports indicate that many
11 people who begin their drug use with prescription painkillers go on
12 to use heroin, a highly dangerous, semi-synthetic opioid drug. The
13 switch often comes when users are struggling with withdrawal and
14 require cheaper, higher opiate doses to ease their symptoms.
15 Studies have shown that the vast majority of heroin users have
16 previously used prescription drugs.

17 The State Commission of Investigation recently reported that
18 New Jersey is in the midst of this prescription pill and heroin
19 epidemic. Between 2006 and 2011, New Jersey drug treatment
20 facilities saw unprecedented increases in the number of individuals
21 seeking treatment for opioid pill and heroin addictions, particularly
22 among those ages 25 or younger. The rise in opioid addiction has
23 had drastic consequences on the health and safety of New Jersey
24 residents. Over the past few years, the number of robberies,
25 assaults, and thefts tied to opioid abuse has risen. New Jersey also
26 has one of the highest HIV/AIDS infection rates in the country,
27 spurred, in part, by the sharing of contaminated syringes among
28 heroin users. In order to effectively address these issues, greater
29 recognition of the dangers of opioid abuse is needed among
30 lawmakers, law enforcement, parents, community leaders, and all
31 residents of the State.

32 This joint resolution requires the Governor to issue an annual
33 proclamation calling upon public officials and the citizens of this
34 State to observe “Opioid Abuse Prevention Month” with
35 appropriate activities and programs.