

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION

No. 32

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman ROY FREIMAN

District 16 (Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex and Somerset)

Assemblyman ANDREW ZWICKER

District 16 (Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex and Somerset)

SYNOPSIS

Designates February 22 of each year as “Autoimmune Encephalitis Awareness Day.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 **A JOINT RESOLUTION** designating February 22 of each year as
2 “Autoimmune Encephalitis Awareness Day” in New Jersey.
3
4 **WHEREAS**, Autoimmune Encephalitis (AE) is a newly-discovered
5 disease in which the body’s immune system erroneously attacks
6 healthy brain cells, causing inflammation of the brain; and
7 **WHEREAS**, AE occurs in adults and children of all ages, although it
8 has been diagnosed most often in young women; and
9 **WHEREAS**, The brain inflammation experienced by AE patients causes
10 rapid onset of a combination of neurological and psychiatric
11 symptoms, including, but not limited to: seizures, severe anxiety,
12 insomnia, memory problems, hallucinations, loss of balance, vision
13 changes, loss of language, cognitive problems, and agitation; and
14 **WHEREAS**, Depending upon the part of the brain affected, and the part
15 of the immune system activated by the disease, the symptoms of
16 AE can vary widely; and
17 **WHEREAS**, Symptoms of AE frequently overlap with those of
18 psychiatric diseases, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, or
19 neurological diseases, such as a seizure disorder, potentially leading
20 to the misdiagnosis of AE as a psychiatric or neurological disorder;
21 and
22 **WHEREAS**, Early diagnosis and treatment with immunotherapy greatly
23 improves health outcomes for the majority of AE patients, while
24 delayed diagnosis and treatment can lead to permanent brain injury
25 and even death; and
26 **WHEREAS**, The direct cause of most cases of AE is still unknown; and
27 **WHEREAS**, A recent study indicates that approximately one million
28 people worldwide have had AE during their lifetime, and 90,000
29 individuals develop AE each year; and
30 **WHEREAS**, Researchers believe that the incidence and prevalence of
31 AE is likely underestimated due to the similarity of the symptoms
32 to psychiatric or neurological disorders; and
33 **WHEREAS**, It is altogether fitting and proper, and in the public interest,
34 to designate February 22 of each year as “Autoimmune Encephalitis
35 Awareness Day,” and to encourage the citizens of this State to learn
36 about AE, its symptoms, and the importance of early diagnosis and
37 treatment for patient recovery; now, therefore,
38
39 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the*
40 *State of New Jersey:*
41
42 1. February 22 of each year shall be designated “Autoimmune
43 Encephalitis Awareness Day” in New Jersey.
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45 2. The Governor is respectfully requested to annually issue a
46 proclamation calling upon public officials and citizens of this State
47 to observe “Autoimmune Encephalitis Awareness Day” with
48 appropriate activities and programs.

1 3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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6 This resolution designates February 22 of each year as
7 “Autoimmune Encephalitis Awareness Day” in New Jersey.
8 Autoimmune Encephalitis (AE) is a devastating disease, in which
9 the body’s immune system mistakenly attacks healthy brain cells,
10 resulting in inflammation of the brain. AE is characterized by the
11 rapid onset of a combination of psychiatric and neurological
12 symptoms, including, but not limited to: severe anxiety, insomnia,
13 seizures, agitation, loss of balance, memory problems,
14 hallucinations, and loss of language. Because many AE symptoms
15 overlap with those of bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and seizure
16 disorders, patients can be misdiagnosed as having a psychiatric or a
17 neurological disease.

18 Recent research indicates that AE occurs more frequently than
19 researchers and clinicians had originally thought. Researchers
20 estimate that 90,000 people worldwide develop AE each year, and
21 one million people have suffered from AE during their lifetime.
22 The fluctuating nature and timing of patients’ symptoms can make
23 an accurate AE diagnosis and treatment challenging. Without
24 prompt diagnosis and treatment with steroids and
25 immunosuppressants, patients can become critically ill; the
26 mortality rate for AE is six percent. However, with early diagnosis
27 and intensive immunotherapy treatment, many patients either
28 substantively or fully recover from this debilitating illness.