

ASSEMBLY HEALTH COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION No. 32

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 27, 2020

The Assembly Health Committee reports favorably Assembly Joint Resolution No. 32.

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

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

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2020-2021 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.