

JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 6

A JOINT RESOLUTION designating September of each year as “Safe Haven Awareness Month” in New Jersey.

WHEREAS, Safe Haven laws have been enacted in several states across the nation in order to prevent unsafe infant abandonments and fatalities as reported in several high profile cases that generated nationwide media attention; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey was one of the first five states to enact a Safe Haven law for infants who are unable to be cared for, with the enactment of the "New Jersey Safe Haven Infant Protection Act" (Safe Haven law) in 2000; and

WHEREAS, The Safe Haven law allows a distressed parent or someone on his or her behalf to safely, legally, and anonymously surrender an unharmed infant to a staff member at one of New Jersey's legally designated Safe Haven sites within 30 days of the child's birth; and

WHEREAS, Legally designated sites in New Jersey include hospital emergency rooms, police and fire stations, and ambulance and first aid squads; and

WHEREAS, Under the Safe Haven law, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) ensures that an infant is placed in a foster or pre-adoptive loving home; and

WHEREAS, The DCF is the State department tasked with promoting the Safe Haven law in New Jersey in partnership with public and private agencies, the Legislature, schools, community organizations, and community leaders; and

WHEREAS, The DCF promotes the Safe Haven law through annual public awareness campaigns, conferences, workshops, community events, and the distribution of educational materials; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey schools will begin teaching high school students about the Safe Haven law in the upcoming school year; and

WHEREAS, Since the enactment of New Jersey's Safe Haven law in 2000, the law has successfully saved the lives of 77 infants in this State; and

WHEREAS, On the 20th anniversary of the enactment of the Safe Haven law, it is altogether fitting, proper, and in the public interest for New Jersey to designate September as “Safe Haven Awareness Month” in order to strengthen the State's efforts in raising awareness and saving infant lives; now, therefore,

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

C.36:2-400 “Safe Haven Awareness Month”, designated.

1. September of each year is designated as “Safe Haven Awareness Month.”

C.36:2-401 Annual gubernatorial proclamation.

2. The Governor may annually issue a proclamation recognizing September as “Safe Haven Awareness Month” and call upon public officials and the residents of the State of New Jersey to observe the month with appropriate activities and programs.

3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

Approved September 30, 2020.