SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION
No. 38

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 10, 2020

Sponsored by:
Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER
District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)
Senator NELLIE POU
District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)

SYNOPSIS

Designates September of each year as “Sickle Cell Awareness Month” in New Jersey.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 8/27/2020)

A JOINT RESOLUTION designating September of each year as "Sickle Cell Awareness Month" in New Jersey.

WHEREAS, Sickle cell disease is a group of disorders that cause red blood cells to become hard and pointed, rather than soft and round, which can lead to pain, organ damage, low blood count, and anemia; and

WHEREAS, Sickle cell disease is the most common genetic disorder in the United States, affecting between 90,000 and 100,000 Americans; and

WHEREAS, Sickle cell disease primarily affects people of African descent, but is also present in populations of Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Asian descent; and

WHEREAS, Sickle cell anemia is the most common, and often the most severe, form of sickle cell disease; and

WHEREAS, The genetic trait for sickle cell disease runs in families, meaning that parents can pass the trait or the disease on to their children; and

WHEREAS, Sickle cell trait is not a disease, and people who have the trait may not be aware of it, but if a mother and father both carry sickle cell trait, each of their children will have a one in four chance of inheriting sickle cell disease; and

WHEREAS, All infants born in New Jersey are screened for sickle cell anemia, and in 2015, 40 babies were confirmed to have the classic form of the disease, and an additional 36 babies were confirmed to have a variant of the disease or carrier status; and

WHEREAS, The closest treatment to a cure that is currently available for sickle cell disease is a bone marrow transplant, an intense and risky medical procedure that is only used in the most severe cases of sickle cell disease; and

WHEREAS, Bone marrow transplantation requires a healthy donor who is a genetically matched to the recipient, which can often be difficult to locate, sometimes delaying the possibility of a cure for some individuals with sickle cell disease; and

WHEREAS, Individuals with sickle cell disease often depend on costly medications and blood transfusions to manage their symptoms; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey has enacted legislation in 2011 to require health insurance to cover treatment for sickle cell anemia and require the Department of Health to publish information for the public to learn about sickle cell anemia, which is now available on the department's website and at health care facilities and social services agencies throughout the State; and

WHEREAS, The United States federal government first officially recognized September as Sickle Cell Awareness Month in 1983, and continues to raise public awareness of the disease in September of each year; and

WHEREAS, There is continued need to raise public awareness in New Jersey about the genetic risk factors associated with, and the symptoms and treatment of, sickle cell disease; now, therefore,

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

1. The month of September of each year is designated as "Sickle Cell Awareness Month" in New Jersey to raise public awareness of the genetic risk factors associated with, and the symptoms and treatment of, sickle cell disease.

2. The Governor is requested to issue a proclamation annually calling upon public officials and the citizens of this State to observe "Sickle Cell Awareness Month" with appropriate activities and programs.

3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This joint resolution designates the month of September of each year as "Sickle Cell Awareness Month" to raise public awareness of the genetic risk factors associated with, and the symptoms and treatment of, sickle cell disease.

The joint resolution also respectfully requests the Governor to issue an annual proclamation calling upon public officials and the citizens of this State to observe the month with appropriate activities and programs.