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ACR-200 Hepatitis epidemic. (2021-2022)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 200

CHAPTER 141

Relative to hepatitis epidemic.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 19, 2022.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 200, Low. Hepatitis epidemic.

This measure would recognize July 28, 2022, as World Hepatitis Day and would encourage Californians to increase hepatitis awareness to win the fight against hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and liver cancer.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, Hepatitis B and C are the leading cause of liver cancer and liver transplants, liver cancer is one of the few cancers that continue to rise in California and the United States, and more people die in California from hepatitis B- and C-related liver disease than any other state; and

WHEREAS, July 28 is World Hepatitis Day, a day bringing awareness of the global burden of viral hepatitis and to influence real change, with a person dying every 30 seconds from a hepatitis-related illness and 350,000,000 people worldwide living with viral hepatitis, 9 out of 10 of whom do not know of their infection; and

WHEREAS, An estimated 300,000 and 400,000 Californians are infected with hepatitis B and hepatitis C respectively, despite the medical system having simple and effective tools, including screening for both hepatitis B and C, that can prevent cancer, vaccination for hepatitis B, and a cure for hepatitis C; and

WHEREAS, Both of these diseases continue to cause devastating loss of life in our communities and cost \$50,000,000 to \$70,000,000 annually and over \$500,000,000 in the past decade; and

WHEREAS, Voluntary screening of adults would help stop this epidemic in its tracks and close disparities in diagnosis and treatment of hepatitis B and C by expanding testing and referral to care, most notably in the Asian and Pacific Islander American and the Black community; and

WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the United States Preventive Services Task Force, and the American Association for the Study of Liver Disease all recommend testing of adults for hepatitis B and C, and these services are covered by the Affordable Care Act, Medicare, and Medicaid as routine preventive services; and

WHEREAS, Unfortunately, awareness of infections among patients remains critically low. Less than one-third of people who have hepatitis B were aware of their condition, while only 60 percent of hepatitis C patients had knowledge of their infection; and

WHEREAS, The passing and signing of Assembly Bill 789 in 2021 makes California the first state in the country to provide adults voluntary screenings for hepatitis B and C; and

WHEREAS, The CDC has recommended universal hepatitis B vaccination among all adults 19 to 59 years of age and adults 60 years of age and older with risk factors for hepatitis B or without identified risk factors but seeking protection; and

WHEREAS, The hepatitis C (HCV) epidemic continues to grow at an alarming rate despite the availability of curative treatments since 2014; and

WHEREAS, The CDC has reported that the annual rate of HCV cases tripled from 2009 to 2018, with the highest rates among younger adults driven primarily by injection drug use; and

WHEREAS, The Viral Hepatitis National Strategic Plan specifically indicates that the implementation of these screenings, vaccinations, and the additional investment in public health programs fighting hepatitis are required to achieve the national goal of viral hepatitis elimination by 2030; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature commends all the dedicated organizations, volunteers, activists, those with lived experience, and those who strive for health justice, serving California with their advocacy and prevention efforts for hepatitis B and C; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature urges all Californian institutions, nonprofit organizations, health care organizations, businesses, community leaders, and residents to help increase hepatitis awareness to win the fight against hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and liver cancer; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature urges all healthcare institutions and providers to ensure full implementation of the mandate to offer hepatitis B and C screening and the followup care and treatment or linkage to appropriate care and treatment to all California adults and to increase clinician education on the importance of hepatitis screenings and adult vaccinations for hepatitis B, and when appropriate, care and treatment; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature urges all Asian and Pacific Islander, Native American, and Black communities, those using drugs, as well as other vulnerable and marginalized communities in California to know their hepatitis status by getting screened, get linked to appropriate care, get vaccinated for hepatitis B if clinically indicated, and get treated for hepatitis B and C, as needed, and urge their friends and families to also be screened and referred to care and treatment, if appropriate; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.