

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 244

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 129

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 244—Relative to hepatitis C awareness.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 16, 2004.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 244, Koretz. Hepatitis C awareness.

This measure would encourage the State Department of Health Services and local health jurisdictions to take various actions relating to hepatitis C virus (HCV) awareness, prevention, and treatment, including improving data collection and education procedures, and applying for available federal funding for HCV-related programs.

WHEREAS, The hepatitis C virus (HCV) presents a serious public health problem, affecting an estimated 638,500 Californians, with an annual cost in health care and lost wages exceeding \$50 million per year; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C is four times more common than HIV in the United States, is responsible for an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 deaths nationwide every year, and is the largest single cause of liver transplantation; and

WHEREAS, No vaccine exists for HCV, and the number of deaths caused by HCV will likely triple within the next 20 years unless effective interventions are developed; and

WHEREAS, Many people carrying HCV are unaware of their infection, with 60 to 70 percent of early HCV infections showing no symptoms; and

WHEREAS, Chronic liver disease progresses slowly without symptoms in the majority of patients for 20 or more years after infection, making detection and diagnosis very difficult; and

WHEREAS, HCV is transmitted by exposure to infected blood and is common among people who have injected drugs; and

WHEREAS, Other at-risk populations include people who received blood transfusions prior to July 1992, children born to HCV-positive women, sex partners of persons with HCV, peace officers, health care workers, and other emergency responders; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C is a significant health problem among veterans, with 20 percent of those tested nationally between 1998 and 2000 testing positive for the virus; and

WHEREAS, According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), of every 100 persons infected with HCV, 75 to 85 percent may develop long-term infection, 70 percent may develop chronic liver disease, 10 to 20 percent may develop cirrhosis over a period of 20 to 30 years, and 1 to 5 percent may die from the consequences of long-term infection, including liver cancer or cirrhosis; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C disproportionately affects people of color, with African-Americans three times more likely than Caucasians to have HCV, and with Latinos being twice as likely as Caucasians to be infected with this serious disease; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 900,000 people in the United States are living with HIV, 25 percent of whom are coinfecting with HCV, and HIV accelerates the progression of chronic liver disease and often compromises a patient's ability to tolerate many lifesaving HIV drugs; and

WHEREAS, In 2001, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed Senate Bill No. 1256, authored by Senator Richard Polanco, mandating that the State Department of Health Services make available to health professionals the latest HCV treatment information, and also requiring the implementation of an outreach program to high-risk populations; and

WHEREAS, The department, in collaboration with local health officials and other stakeholders, convened a hepatitis C working group, which reviewed published studies and in 2001 created "The Hepatitis C Strategic Plan," a coordinated local and statewide effort supported by public and private partnerships; and

WHEREAS, Most of the strategic plan remains unrealized, with serious deficiencies in screening, testing, referral, treatment, prevention, and data collection; and

WHEREAS, Although HCV and HCV/HIV coinfection have created a crisis in California, awareness of HCV is very low, and many people do not know they are at risk and should seek testing and treatment; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature of the State of California urges the State Department of Health Services to improve the data collection process for chronic and acute HCV and HCV/HIV coinfection; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature of the State of California strongly encourages the State Department of Health Services to implement components of the 2001 Hepatitis C Strategic Plan through existing programs and educational materials whenever possible; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature of the State of California encourages state and local agencies to incorporate HCV education and services into



existing programs as much as possible, especially in the highly related areas of HIV/AIDS and substance abuse; and be it further

Resolved, That local health jurisdictions are urged to apply for federal funds available from the CDC for hepatitis C-related programs, including the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) Cooperative Agreement Program that enables some large cities and counties to apply for funding to hire local HCV coordinators; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the governing officer of each county board of supervisors in California, the Director of Health Services, and the chief medical official of each local health jurisdiction in California.

