

Legislation Text

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Declaring May 2018 to be Hepatitis Awareness Month in Philadelphia to recognize and support the joint efforts of “Hep B United Philadelphia” and “Hepatitis C Allies of Philadelphia” coalitions aimed at raising awareness of the link between viral hepatitis and liver cancer.

WHEREAS, Hepatitis B and C viruses are serious public health concerns; an estimated 5 million Americans and 65,000 Philadelphians are living with these viruses, which are leading causes of liver cancer and the most common reason for liver transplants; most people living with hepatitis B and C are not aware of their infection; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis B is the world’s most serious liver infection, causing over 80% of primary liver cancer cases in the world, disproportionately impacting people of Asian, Pacific Islander, and African descent; killing 1 in 4 chronically infected persons prematurely from cirrhosis, liver cancer or liver failure; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis B is completely preventable with a safe and effective vaccine but less than 40% of high-risk individuals are vaccinated against hepatitis B; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C is the most common bloodborne infection in the U.S. and since a majority of people living with the virus do not even know they are infected, hepatitis C now kills more people than HIV/AIDS; and

WHEREAS, In the U.S., liver cancer is the only cancer that continues to rise in new cases and in deaths each year, for both men and women, primarily due to infections with hepatitis B and hepatitis C; and

WHEREAS, 28,000 people each year are diagnosed with liver cancer in the U.S.; the 5-year survival rate for liver cancer is only 16.6%; and 23,000 people each year die from liver cancer in the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis B and C testing followed by treatment is associated with a 50%-80% reduction in the risk of liver cancer; and

WHEREAS, Over 20,000 Philadelphians are living with hepatitis B, and risk populations need to learn their status so their infection can be controlled with medication, thereby halting progression to liver cancer, liver failure and death; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia’s Asian communities are disproportionately affected by hepatitis B, with infection rates ranging from 4%-23%; but fortunately, they are supported by Hep B United Philadelphia, marking its 7th year as the largest local community-based coalition working to eliminate health disparities faced by Asian Philadelphians; and

WHEREAS, 50,000 Philadelphians are living with hepatitis C but fewer than 10% receive care and treatment for it; a cure for hepatitis C is now available and all Philadelphians living with the virus deserve access to medication that can eliminate the disease and prevent the costs associated with serious liver disease; and

WHEREAS, As a result of the current opioid crisis seen within Philadelphia, the cases of acute hepatitis B and hepatitis C are increasing with the rise of injection drug use. The need for increased awareness, education, screening and use of vaccination is important now more than ever; and

WHEREAS, The Hepatitis C Allies of Philadelphia have succeeded in convening state leaders to begin talking about ending hepatitis C in Pennsylvania, successfully advocated to have some hepatitis C treatment restrictions lifted, and will continue to demand equitable access to a cure to eliminate hepatitis C from our community; and

WHEREAS, Collaboration between Hep B United Philadelphia and Hepatitis C Allies of Philadelphia has led to: the recognition of Philadelphia as a national leader in the fight against viral hepatitis; the mobilization of local stakeholders to raise the public profile of viral hepatitis as an urgent health priority; the establishment of strong private-public partnerships; the identification of gaps in local hepatitis B and C services, and development of innovative projects to improve access to hepatitis prevention, testing, and treatment; and

WHEREAS, Efforts to fight viral hepatitis by Hep B United Philadelphia and Hepatitis C Allies of Philadelphia are supported by the people of Philadelphia, including multitudes of community members, healthcare institutions, schools of medicine and public health, students, community and cultural organizations, local businesses, academics, and the Philadelphia Medical Society; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That May 2018 is declared Hepatitis Awareness Month in Philadelphia to recognize and support the joint efforts of “Hep B United Philadelphia” and “Hepatitis C Allies of Philadelphia” aimed at raising the profile of viral hepatitis and liver cancer as urgent health priorities, and at improving awareness about the link between viral hepatitis and liver cancer.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Council of the City of Philadelphia supports testing all high-risk Philadelphians for hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of the resolution be presented to the Hepatitis B Foundation as the lead organization of Hep B United Philadelphia, and to the Hepatitis C Allies of Philadelphia, further evidencing the sincere support and admiration of this legislative body.