

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 202

By Crowe

A RESOLUTION relative to Hepatitis C screening in Tennessee.

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C is a long-term illness that can last a lifetime and lead to serious liver problems, including cirrhosis and liver cancer; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C is the most prevalent bloodborne disease in the United States; if undetected and untreated, Hepatitis C infections can lead to liver disease, liver cancer, or death; and

WHEREAS, the majority of the 70,000 Tennesseans living with Hepatitis C do not know that they are infected; and

WHEREAS, between 2014 and 2018, Tennessee saw an increase of 193 percent in the number of new Hepatitis C cases in comparison to the U.S. increase of seventy-one percent; and

WHEREAS, in the last decade, new cases of Hepatitis C have increased among pregnant women in the U.S., nearly doubling in number since 2009; and

WHEREAS, the increase in the number of pregnant women with Hepatitis C is particularly pronounced in states, such as Tennessee, in the Appalachian region that have been severely impacted by the opioid epidemic; and

WHEREAS, many of those new cases are occurring in women of childbearing age; in 2018, the Tennessee Department of Health reported that some counties in Tennessee showed perinatal Hepatitis C exposure rates as high as eleven percent of all live births; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C in pregnancy poses a risk not only to the pregnant women but also to their newborns, as mothers can expose their infants during pregnancy; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee data has shown that seventy-seven percent of infants exposed to Hepatitis C were not provided with appropriate testing and care; for African-American infants exposed to Hepatitis C, ninety percent of the infants were not appropriately tested; and

WHEREAS, the best way to manage and prevent spread of this infectious disease is to ensure all pregnant women in Tennessee are screened with each pregnancy; and

WHEREAS, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that all pregnant women be screened for Hepatitis C with each pregnancy; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we strongly encourage health insurers, providers, and hospitals to adopt the CDC Hepatitis C screening guidelines to test all pregnant women in Tennessee for Hepatitis C to help prevent the spread of new infections.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that for those who test positive, we also strongly encourage that appropriate follow-up testing and care be provided to mothers diagnosed with Hepatitis C and that infants born to these mothers be monitored for potential infection and provided care.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that certified copies of this resolution be transmitted to the commissioner of the Department of Health and to the Tennessee Initiative for Perinatal Quality Care (TIPQC).