

By Senator Aronberg

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## Senate Resolution

A resolution recognizing May 2008 as "Hepatitis Awareness Month."

WHEREAS, May is World Hepatitis Awareness Month, with the inaugural World Hepatitis Awareness Month held in 2004, and since then World Hepatitis Awareness Month has grown to become a truly international movement, and

WHEREAS, World Hepatitis Awareness Month is an opportunity for the global hepatitis community to increase awareness of viral hepatitis and alert a worldwide audience to risk factors and symptoms of this infection, and

WHEREAS, often described as "silent killers," both hepatitis B and C can lead to cirrhosis, liver cancer, and, ultimately, liver failure and death; however, in many cases, hepatitis can be cured or managed using currently available treatments, and

WHEREAS, around the world an estimated 350 to 400 million people are living with hepatitis B, and more than 180 million people worldwide are infected with hepatitis C, and

WHEREAS, in the United States, it is estimated that up to 2 million people are chronically infected with hepatitis B, and an estimated 5 million people are infected with hepatitis C, and

WHEREAS, an estimated 300,000 Floridians are infected with hepatitis C and an estimated 75,000 Floridians are infected with hepatitis B, and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control has identified African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Pacific Islanders, as well as Native Americans and Alaskan Natives, as having higher rates of viral hepatitis, and

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30 WHEREAS, the chronic viral hepatitis disease burden in the  
31 United States is greatly underestimated. Approximately 200,000  
32 patients are diagnosed with hepatitis B, but the total adjusted  
33 prevalence of the disease is approximately 2 million people  
34 affected; approximately 800,000 patients are diagnosed with  
35 hepatitis C, whereas the total adjusted prevalence is  
36 approximately 5 million people affected, and

37 WHEREAS, the impact of late diagnosis leads to an increasing  
38 need for liver transplants and increased prevalence of liver  
39 cancer, which is the fastest-growing type of cancer in incidence  
40 in the United States while other types of cancer are declining in  
41 rate, and

42 WHEREAS, there is a tremendous need for increasing early  
43 screening, diagnosis, and treatment, and effective interventions,  
44 such as testing, diagnosis, immunization, and counseling can help  
45 prevent and control viral hepatitis and protect personal and  
46 community health, and

47 WHEREAS, the Florida Department of Health has a  
48 comprehensive, statewide Hepatitis Prevention Program that  
49 includes raising public awareness of viral hepatitis, providing  
50 public and professional education, tracking the burden of disease  
51 and detecting outbreaks, conducting research, and offering free  
52 testing and vaccination for adults at increased risk for  
53 infection or for the serious consequences of infection, and

54 WHEREAS, hepatitis A and B are preventable by vaccination,  
55 and Florida's Hepatitis Prevention Program provided over 37,000  
56 hepatitis A and B vaccines to at-risk adults in 2007 through  
57 county health departments, and

58 WHEREAS, Florida's Hepatitis Prevention Program tested more

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59 | than 24,000 at-risk adults for viral hepatitis using the state  
60 | laboratory services and, for 1,500 at-risk adults, using home  
61 | test kits in 2007, and

62 |       WHEREAS, patient groups and governments around the world  
63 | have recognized the need for greater awareness of viral hepatitis  
64 | and are working together on events during World Hepatitis  
65 | Awareness Month in order to drive awareness and galvanize action  
66 | by people who may be at risk, NOW, THEREFORE,

67 |

68 | Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida:

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70 |       That the Florida Senate supports the goals and ideals of  
71 | World Hepatitis Awareness Month; calls upon the people of Florida  
72 | to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities;  
73 | and supports all efforts to raise awareness of the consequences  
74 | of untreated viral hepatitis as a serious public health issue.