
HOUSE RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING AND SUPPORTING ONGOING COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, HEP FREE HAWAII, AND OTHERS TO PRODUCE A STATEWIDE PLAN TO ELIMINATE VIRAL HEPATITIS IN HAWAII.

1 WHEREAS, approximately 4,000 preventable hepatitis-related
2 deaths occur worldwide each day, even though there is an
3 effective cure for hepatitis C and a vaccine and effective
4 treatment for hepatitis B; and

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6 WHEREAS, approximately three hundred million individuals
7 worldwide are living with viral hepatitis but are unaware of
8 their condition and therefore unable to take actions to protect
9 themselves and others; and

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11 WHEREAS, the federal Centers for Disease Control and
12 Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination against hepatitis B for
13 all infants, all children younger than nineteen years of age who
14 have not been vaccinated, individuals with hepatitis C or human
15 immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, individuals with chronic
16 liver disease, individuals at risk for infection by exposure to
17 blood or by sexual exposure, imprisoned individuals, and
18 international travelers to countries where hepatitis B is
19 common; and

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21 WHEREAS, the CDC recommends that individuals born between
22 1945 and 1965 be tested for hepatitis C; and

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24 WHEREAS, the Hawaii Opioid Initiative State Plan recognizes
25 that the opioid epidemic has contributed to increasing hepatitis
26 infections across the United States, including among youth; and

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28 WHEREAS, increasing insurance coverage and developing more
29 safe and effective medications for combating hepatitis B and
30 curing hepatitis C have made the prevention, screening, and



1 treatment of both diseases increasingly accessible and
2 worthwhile; and

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4 WHEREAS, Hawaii has one of the highest rates of liver
5 cancer in the nation, the leading causes of which are hepatitis
6 B and C; and

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8 WHEREAS, there are up to 63,000 individuals in the State
9 possibly affected with hepatitis B or C; and

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11 WHEREAS, the State is currently engaged in proactive
12 measures to combat viral hepatitis among underserved and at-risk
13 communities, including:

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- 15 (1) Recently expanding Med-QUEST access to hepatitis C
16 medications, pursuant to recommendations from the
17 American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases;
18
 - 19 (2) Maintaining its longstanding syringe access program to
20 curb the spread of hepatitis C among individuals who
21 inject drugs;
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 - 23 (3) Identifying and supporting foreign-born pregnant women
24 and their families at risk for hepatitis B; and
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 - 26 (4) Ensuring that homeless communities are immunized
27 against hepatitis A to prevent outbreaks; and
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29 WHEREAS, the Harm Reduction Services Branch of the
30 Department of Health offers many viral hepatitis services
31 through the Viral Hepatitis Education and Prevention Program,
32 including vaccines, testing, education, training, and community
33 engagement; and

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35 WHEREAS, Hep Free Hawaii was formed as a community
36 coalition of over ninety partners and stakeholders, including
37 medical professionals, public health professionals, community
38 advocates, and harm reduction providers -- all dedicated to
39 increasing awareness of and access to viral hepatitis B and C
40 care services in Hawaii; and
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1 WHEREAS, Hep Free Hawaii's mission is to raise awareness of
2 and increase access for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment
3 of liver disease, especially viral hepatitis and related harms;
4 and

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6 WHEREAS, the federal Department of Health and Human
7 Services has issued a National Viral Hepatitis Action Plan,
8 recommending collaborative efforts to prevent new infections;
9 reduce deaths and improve health; reduce disparities; and
10 coordinate, monitor, and report on activities; and

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12 WHEREAS, the vision of the National Viral Hepatitis Action
13 Plan is as follows: "The United States will be a place where new
14 viral hepatitis infections have been eliminated, where all
15 people with chronic hepatitis B and C know their status, and
16 everyone with chronic hepatitis B and C has access to high
17 quality health care and curative treatments, free from stigma
18 and discrimination."; and

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20 WHEREAS, the National Viral Hepatitis Action Plan
21 recognizes the disproportionate impact of viral hepatitis on
22 some populations, including baby boomers, individuals who inject
23 drugs, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asian-Americans and
24 Pacific Islanders, African-Americans, individuals in
25 correctional facilities, veterans, homeless individuals, men who
26 have sex with men, pregnant women, and individuals with HIV; and

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28 WHEREAS, the National Viral Hepatitis Action Plan
29 identified several challenges that need to be addressed to
30 improve the response to viral hepatitis, including limited data,
31 low provider awareness, low public awareness and low perceived
32 risk, limited public health and health system response, the high
33 cost of treatment, and stigma and discrimination; and

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35 WHEREAS, a growing number of states, localities, health
36 systems, and non-governmental organizations have undertaken a
37 range of collaborative efforts aimed at elimination of viral
38 hepatitis; and

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40 WHEREAS, the Harm Reduction Services Branch of the
41 Department of Health; Hep Free Hawaii; and other stakeholders,



1 including the Lieutenant Governor, have declared the elimination
2 of viral hepatitis in Hawaii an achievable and important
3 priority, with implementation planning initiated at the Hawaii
4 Hepatitis Elimination Planning Summit in Honolulu on July 28,
5 2019; now, therefore,

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7 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
8 Thirtieth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of
9 2020, that this body hereby recognizes and supports the ongoing
10 collaborative efforts between the Department of Health, Hep Free
11 Hawaii, and others to produce a Statewide plan to eliminate
12 viral hepatitis in Hawaii, which would be the first of its kind
13 in the nation; and

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15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this statewide plan, including
16 plans for implementation and any recommended legislation, will
17 be presented at an informational briefing to the Legislature
18 prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2021; and

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20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
21 Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor,
22 Director of Health, Branch Chief of the Harm Reduction Services
23 Branch of the Department of Health, and Executive Director of
24 the Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center.

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OFFERED BY:  _____

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