



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1463

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to establish a goal of universal Hepatitis B virus screening and vaccinations to all New York City residents who are at-risk for chronic infection.

By Council Members Gerson, Brewer, Fidler, James, gentile, Gonzalez, Koppell, Liu, Palma, Sanders Jr., Seabrook and Weprin

Whereas, Hepatitis B is a serious disease caused by the Hepatitis B virus (HBV), that attacks the liver and can cause lifelong infection, cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver, liver cancer, liver failure and death; and

Whereas, According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HBV is transmitted through blood and other bodily fluids, which can occur through such avenues as direct blood-to-blood contact, unprotected sex, and use of non-sterile syringes and from an infected woman to her newborn during birth; and

Whereas, The CDC estimates that 1.25 million people living in the United States are chronically infected with Hepatitis B; and

Whereas, According to the Hepatitis B Foundation, Hepatitis B is known as a “silent infection” because most people do not know that they are infected, as many have no symptoms and those with symptoms mistakenly believe that they have the flu; and

Whereas, Although most healthy adults who are infected with acute Hepatitis B will recover and develop protective antibodies, ninety percent of infants infected at birth, thirty percent of children infected at ages one to five years and six percent of persons infected after age five will develop chronic HBV, according to the CDC; and

Whereas, The CDC states that Asian Americans and other immigrant populations suffer disproportionately from Hepatitis B, due to conditions in their native countries, compounded by factors such as

language and cultural barriers, stigma associated with certain conditions and lack of health insurance; and

Whereas, A 2006 New York University Medical Center study on Hepatitis B Infection Rate among New York City's Asian-American community found that more than 15 percent of Asians living in New York City are chronically infected with HBV-an infection rate 35 times higher than is found in the general U.S. population; and

Whereas, Although Hepatitis B can be prevented by a safe and effective vaccination available since 1982, and there are medications available to treat chronic Hepatitis B infection, however there is currently no cure for Hepatitis B once acquired; and

Whereas, Screening of populations at high risk for Hepatitis B remains imperative to any strategy to prevent and cure HBV; and

Whereas, The vaccination for Hepatitis B is administered in three separate shots, and is safe, effective and recommended for people at high-risk including: persons identified through screening as in need of inoculation as well as intravenous drug users who share needles, health care workers who have contact with infected blood, persons having sexual contact with a person who is infected, homosexual or a bisexual male, particularly those with multiple partners, and travelers to areas of the world where Hepatitis B is endemic; and

Whereas, The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene currently recommends that Hepatitis B vaccine be universally administered to all children, along with their routine childhood immunizations beginning at birth or two months of age; and

Whereas, During the month of May, the nation recognizes Hepatitis Awareness Month, and Hepatitis B receives additional attention during its own Awareness Week, which was held from May 19<sup>th</sup> to May 23<sup>rd</sup>; and

Whereas, National and City attention is imperative to raise public awareness of Hepatitis B prevention and to encourage individuals to be screened for this disease and take necessary safeguards to keep those who they interact with safe; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to establish a goal of universal Hepatitis B virus screening and vaccinations to all New York City residents who are at-risk for chronic infection.

JM  
LS# 5514  
May 23, 2008