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**HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 533**

Offered January 14, 2015

Prefiled December 23, 2014

*Designating February, in 2016 and in each succeeding year, as Gum Disease Awareness Month in Virginia.*

Patrons—Marshall, D.W. (By Request); Senator: Stanley

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, periodontal disease, also known as gum disease, is an infection that attacks the bones and gums that support teeth; and

WHEREAS, gum disease is primarily caused by plaque, but other contributing factors may include overall condition of teeth, general health, nutrition, habits, and stress; and

WHEREAS, if plaque is not removed by regular brushing and flossing, it can harden into tartar, which promotes more bacterial growth, further harming bones and gums; and

WHEREAS, in the early stages, gum disease is painless and difficult to detect, but common early warning signs may include bad breath, tender or swollen gums, and bleeding during brushing or flossing; and

WHEREAS, mounting evidence from academic research indicates gum disease is a possible precursor to heart disease, diabetes, stroke, some cancers, and even stillbirths; and

WHEREAS, between 74 and 85 percent of Americans suffer from some degree of gum disease but fewer than half are aware of it; building awareness of the disease can improve community health and prevent serious health consequences; and

WHEREAS, Gum Disease Awareness Month is an annual health-promotion event that helps people make lifelong improvements in their health and quality of life by sharing information and spreading awareness; Virginians are encouraged to take an active role in preventing gum disease with simple tools and habit changes; and

WHEREAS, in the interest of public wellness, the Commonwealth is committed to providing reliable oral health information, including how to prevent and treat gum disease and the dangerous consequences of leaving it untreated; and

WHEREAS, Gum Disease Awareness Month further supports community health by disseminating important information and the tips and tools to empower citizens to make improvements to their health and the health of their families; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate February, in 2016 and in each succeeding year, as Gum Disease Awareness Month in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution to the Virginia Dental Association so that members of the organization may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates post the designation of this month on the General Assembly's website.