ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 745

Designating the first week of July, in 2017 and in each succeeding year, as Substance-Exposed Infant Awareness Week in Virginia.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 24, 2017
Agreed to by the Senate, February 14, 2017

WHEREAS, abuse of and dependence on prescription painkillers, heroin, and other opioids have led to an opioid epidemic across the Commonwealth and throughout the nation; and

WHEREAS, prenatal exposure to opioids may cause infants to be born with an opioid dependency condition called Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS); and

WHEREAS, babies born with NAS may experience irritability, low birth weight, respiratory conditions, tremors, seizures, feeding difficulties, and other health-related challenges; and

WHEREAS, the rate of opioid abuse and dependence among pregnant women at time of delivery rose by 910 percent between 2004 and 2014, resulting in five infants per day being born drug dependent; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Health recorded 493 cases of NAS in 2013, an increase of nearly 100 cases over the previous year and an increase of more than 400 cases over 1999; and

WHEREAS, prevention, education, public awareness, and knowledge of available treatment resources are crucial to reducing the physical, social, and economic impact of NAS; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth is committed to fighting substance abuse and dependence and promoting safe environments and the compassionate care necessary to give every newborn the best possible start in life; in November 2016, the Virginia Department of Health declared that the opioid addiction crisis is a public health emergency in Virginia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate the first week of July, in 2017 and in each succeeding year, as Substance-Exposed Infant Awareness Week in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution to the Virginia Department of Health so that members of the department 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 week on the General Assembly's website.