HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 626

Requesting the Virginia Department of Health to take action to increase awareness of shingles and shingles prevention. Report.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 4, 2019
Agreed to by the Senate, February 20, 2019

WHEREAS, herpes zoster, also known as shingles, is a disease caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox, so any person who has contracted chickenpox during their lifetime is at risk for developing shingles; and

WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 98 percent of adults in the United States are at risk for developing shingles, and nearly one in three people in the United States will develop shingles in their lifetime, with shingles affecting more than one million Americans each year; and

WHEREAS, a person's risk of developing shingles increases with age; nearly half of individuals who develop shingles are over 60 years of age and approximately half of people who reach 85 years of age will develop shingles in their lifetime; and

WHEREAS, according to the CDC, shingles is a viral infection that causes a painful, sometimes-severe rash and other symptoms, including long-term nerve pain, fever, headache, chills, upset stomach, muscle weakness, skin infection, scarring, and decreased or loss of vision or hearing; and

WHEREAS, as much as 20 percent of adults who have contracted shingles will develop postherpetic neuralgia, a debilitating complication of shingles that causes severe pain, that may interfere with sleep and recreational activities, and that may be associated with clinical depression; and

WHEREAS, vaccines have reduced the burden of widespread and often fatal diseases, enabling individuals to lead longer and healthier lives while reducing health care costs; and

WHEREAS, although much attention has been paid to the importance of childhood vaccinations, there is a general lack of awareness of adult-recommended vaccines and a misperception that immunizations are unnecessary for healthy adults; and

WHEREAS, the CDC and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommend that healthy adults 50 years of age and older be vaccinated against shingles to prevent shingles and shingles-related complications; and

WHEREAS, despite the recommendations of CDC officials and other experts, as of 2015 only 30 percent of eligible adults had received the shingles vaccine; and

WHEREAS, the annual economic burden of shingles in American adults is estimated to be between $782 million and $5 billion; and

WHEREAS, the Institute of Medicine has stated that missed prevention opportunities is one of the six key causes of excess spending in the U.S. health care system; and

WHEREAS, millions of American adults go without routine and recommended vaccinations because our medical system is not set up to ensure that adults receive regular preventive health care; and

WHEREAS, during the month of August, which is is observed as National Immunization Awareness Month, residents of Virginia should be encouraged to speak with their health care provider to ensure that they have been properly vaccinated against shingles according to current CDC and ACIP recommendations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia Department of Health be requested to take action to increase awareness of shingles and shingles prevention.

The Virginia Department of Health shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary and report of its progress in meeting the requests of this resolution no later than the first day of the 2020 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary and report shall be submitted for publication as a report document as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.