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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 684

Offered January 14, 2009

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Designating February 7 through 14, in 2009 and in each succeeding year, as Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week in Virginia, culminating in the observance of National Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Day on February 14 each year.

Patron—Bulova

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the health and well-being of all children throughout the Commonwealth are of paramount importance to Virginia's families and communities; and

WHEREAS, over 25,000 babies are born each year in the United States with congenital heart defects, abnormalities in the heart's structure that are present at birth, and approximately 8 out of every 1,000 newborns have congenital heart defects, ranging from mild to severe, according to KidsHealth; and

WHEREAS, the National Institutes of Health reports that congenital heart defects are responsible for more deaths in the first year of life than any other birth defect, and according to the Children's Heart Foundation, "for every dollar appropriated, only one penny is provided for pediatric research, and only a portion of that penny goes to support research on heart defects, the most common birth defect"; and

WHEREAS, in Virginia, approximately 1,200 babies are born yearly with a congenital heart defect, according to the Virginia Department of Health, and congenital heart defects are among the Commonwealth's most common birth defects and 20 to 45 percent of children with a congenital heart defect have other major birth defects; and

WHEREAS, congenital heart defects are often fatal due to their seriousness, the lack of effective medical intervention options, and the limited availability of infant donor hearts, and data reported by the American Heart Association indicate that "nearly twice as many children die from congenital heart disease in the United States each year as die from all forms of childhood cancers combined"; and

WHEREAS, the origins and symptoms of congenital heart defects are becoming more readily identifiable and the range of surgical options are expanding continuously due to diligent research efforts and diagnostic and therapeutic treatment experiences of doctors and scientists; and

WHEREAS, the American Heart Association has stated that "virtually all children with simple defects survive into adulthood, and although exercise capacity may be limited and some children with congenital heart disease have developmental delay or other learning difficulties, most people lead normal or nearly normal lives"; and

WHEREAS, many of Virginia's families and communities are significantly affected by infant illness and death caused by congenital heart defects, and the costs of care for serious congenital heart defects in the United States may exceed \$2.2 billion for inpatient surgery alone, causing enormous emotional strain and financial exigency for young families during a particularly difficult time; and

WHEREAS, there is much to learn about the causes of and effective treatments for congenital heart defects and it is important for parents, pediatricians, and nurses to recognize the warning signs associated with congenital heart defects among newborns so they may provide proper treatment as early as possible; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate February 7 through 14, in 2009 and in each succeeding year, as Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week in Virginia, culminating in the observance of National Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Day on February 14 each year; and, be it

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

INTRODUCED

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