

The House Committee on Health & Human Services offers the following substitute to HR 701:

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing Hepatitis C Awareness and Education Month and urging the Division of Public
2 Health of the Department of Human Resources to undertake certain related studies; and for
3 other purposes.

4 WHEREAS, Hepatitis C is a "silent epidemic" and is the most common chronic bloodborne
5 viral infection in the United States; and

6 WHEREAS, Hepatitis C virus infection is a life-threatening disease that the Centers of
7 Disease Control and Prevention conservatively estimate affects 4,000,000 persons in the
8 United States; and

9 WHEREAS, there are approximately 41,000 newly infected Hepatitis C patients per year as
10 of 2002; and

11 WHEREAS, Hepatitis C infections accounted for approximately 25,000 deaths per year in
12 2002 and is predicted to cause 30,000 annual deaths within ten years; and

13 WHEREAS, Hepatitis C infection is three to four times more prevalent in the United States
14 than HIV/AIDS, and approximately one third of all HIV infected persons are coinfecting with
15 HCV; and

16 WHEREAS, 85 percent of Hepatitis C virus-infected persons are chronically infected; and

17 WHEREAS, infected individuals serve as a source of transmission to others; and

18 WHEREAS, very few of those infected with Hepatitis C virus are aware that they are
19 infected, since symptoms often do not develop until ten to 20 years after the infection is
20 contracted; and

1 WHEREAS, infected individuals who are unaware that they are infected are unlikely to take
2 precautions to prevent the spread or exacerbation of their infection; and

3 WHEREAS, no vaccine is available for Hepatitis C virus; and

4 WHEREAS, Hepatitis C is now a leading cause of liver disease, placing infected individuals
5 at elevated risk for chronic liver disease, liver cancer, and other Hepatitis C virus related
6 illnesses; and

7 WHEREAS, Hepatitis C affects rural populations disproportionately and Georgia has 117
8 counties which are medically underserved; and

9 WHEREAS, detection is possible through blood screenings and treatment is effective in 10
10 to 40 percent of infected persons; and

11 WHEREAS, Hepatitis C should be treated as the public health crisis it has become, and
12 government should take a proactive role in prevention education and making treatment
13 available for those already infected with Hepatitis C; and

14 WHEREAS, the House of Representatives is concerned with preserving and protecting the
15 health of the citizens of Georgia.

16 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
17 the members of this body recognize the month of October as Hepatitis C Awareness and
18 Education Month.

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Division of Public Health of the Department of
20 Human Resources is urged to undertake a study of the public health impact of Hepatitis C
21 in the State of Georgia and the need for programs or policies to enhance education,
22 awareness, detection, and prevention of the disease in the general population.

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Division of Public Health of the Department of
24 Human Resources is urged to undertake a study of the conditions, needs, issues, and
25 problems mentioned above or related thereto and recommend any actions or legislation as
26 necessary or appropriate.

- 1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
- 2 and directed to transmit an appropriate copy of this resolution to the Division of Public
- 3 Health of the Department of Human Resources.