

Senate Resolution 1385

By: Senator Butler of the 55th

A RESOLUTION

- 1 Commending James R. Eckman, M.D.; and for other purposes.
- 2 WHEREAS, sickle cell disease is one of the most common genetic diseases in the United
3 States, affecting one out of four hundred African Americans; and
- 4 WHEREAS, this population has been under-served by a lack of specialty care available in
5 the communities where the disease is prevalent; and
- 6 WHEREAS, the disease causes recurrent pain episodes, increased infections, and other
7 complications requiring emergency medical intervention; and
- 8 WHEREAS, prior to 1984, patients suffering with a sickle cell pain crisis were seen in
9 Atlanta emergency rooms, placed low on triage lists, and evaluation procedures were erratic
10 and sometimes nonexistent; and
- 11 WHEREAS, Dr. James Eckman arrived in Atlanta from the University of Minnesota Medical
12 School in 1978 to establish a sickle cell program at Grady Memorial Hospital and Emory
13 University School of Medicine; and
- 14 WHEREAS, with few resources, Dr. Eckman obtained grant funding to support the salaries
15 of a genetics nurse, a social worker, and a clinical nurse specialist in psychiatry as the
16 beginning of a multidisciplinary team; and
- 17 WHEREAS, Dr. Eckman, with an intense lobbying effort by the Sickle Cell Patient/Parent
18 Group and hospital administration, convinced members of the Georgia General Assembly
19 of the need for a specialized clinic in the State of Georgia; and

1 WHEREAS, in 1984, the Georgia General Assembly provided the original state grant of
2 \$550,000.00 to Grady Memorial Hospital to fund the world's first 24-hour comprehensive
3 acute care sickle cell center; and

4 WHEREAS, having established the clinic on this foundation, during the past 21 years, under
5 the leadership of Dr. Eckman, the center cared for more than 2,000 patients, expanded its
6 scope of services, and became an international leader in the care of sickle cell patients; and

7 WHEREAS, this has occurred through the development of clinical guidelines, authored by
8 Dr. Eckman, first published with a maternal and child health grant and distributed for free
9 worldwide in 1991; and

10 WHEREAS, the clinical success of the center, led by Dr. Eckman, with a dedicated staff of
11 hematologists, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, nurses, clinic assistants, social
12 workers and clinical nurse specialists in psychiatry, allowed the staff to apply for federal
13 research funding which resulted in the award of \$7 million over five years in research
14 funding for projects to discover new treatments and prevent complications; and

15 WHEREAS, as professor of hematology, oncology and medicine and adjunct professor of
16 pediatrics in medical genetics, Dr. Eckman teaches medical students, residents, and fellows
17 the art and science of patient care; and

18 WHEREAS, he spends countless hours preparing stimulating lectures with practical handouts
19 and slides and teaches at the bedside as a role model for house staff demonstrating how to
20 deliver compassionate and expert care; and

21 WHEREAS, with all his duties and responsibilities, he remains available to comfort a patient
22 with a reassuring word or answer a family member's questions; and

23 WHEREAS, Dr. Eckman clearly loves to teach and views educating others as a way to
24 ultimately enhance the quality of the care offered to the patients; and

25 WHEREAS, Dr. Eckman has received widespread recognition for his work and is listed as
26 one of America's Top Doctors by Castle Connolly Medical Ltd, is a recipient of the 2000 and
27 2002 National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems Safety Net Clinician
28 Award, among others.

1 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
2 join in recognizing and commending James R. Eckman, M.D., for his dedication, outstanding
3 leadership, and significant contributions to the citizens of the State of Georgia.

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
5 to transmit an appropriate copy of this resolution to James R. Eckman, M.D.