

# ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION

No. 167

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 2, 2024

**Sponsored by:**

**Assemblyman ANTHONY S. VERRELLI**

**District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)**

**Assemblywoman VERLINA REYNOLDS-JACKSON**

**District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)**

**SYNOPSIS**

Designates May 17 of each year as “Necrotizing Enterocolitis Awareness Day” in New Jersey.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 1/23/2025)

1 **A JOINT RESOLUTION** designating May 17 of each year as  
2 “Necrotizing Enterocolitis Awareness Day” in New Jersey.

3  
4 **WHEREAS**, Necrotizing Enterocolitis (NEC) is a devastating intestinal  
5 disease that can affect medically fragile infants, which causes  
6 inflammation, infection, and systemic tissue damage; and

7 **WHEREAS**, Despite limited public understanding for the condition,  
8 NEC affects one in 1,000 premature infants and is the third most  
9 common form of death in hospitalized infants; and

10 **WHEREAS**, NEC affects two to five percent of all premature infants  
11 but is responsible for up to 20 percent of Neonatal Intensive Care  
12 Unit costs; and

13 **WHEREAS**, Symptoms and risk factors may be as innocuous as low  
14 birthweight, poor blood circulation, low blood oxygenation level,  
15 difficulty nursing, and the stress of the birthing process; and

16 **WHEREAS**, The condition produces an increased risk of later  
17 functional impairment including cerebral palsy, limited gross motor  
18 skills, cardiac issues, malnutrition, and developmental delays; and

19 **WHEREAS**, NEC limits healthy neural development, resulting in poor  
20 executive function and decreased working memory capacity over  
21 time; and

22 **WHEREAS**, The combination of immediate healthcare costs and long  
23 term individual costs results in approximately \$5.8 billion in  
24 hospital expenses each year; and

25 **WHEREAS**, In New Jersey, approximately five in every 100,000  
26 infants die due to NEC each year; and

27 **WHEREAS**, Supports and interventions exist to reduce the social and  
28 financial burdens of the disease; and

29 **WHEREAS**, Public education, regular neurodevelopmental screenings,  
30 nursing support, and use of probiotics may prevent a condition that  
31 erodes young families throughout the State, nation, and world; and

32 **WHEREAS**, May 17 has been designated as World NEC Awareness  
33 Day by the NEC Society and other states; and

34 **WHEREAS**, Based on the foregoing, it is in public interest to increase  
35 awareness for this condition and its social determinants in order to  
36 reduce its prevalence within New Jersey; now, therefore,

37  
38 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*  
39 *of New Jersey:*

40  
41 1. May 17 of each year is designated as “Necrotizing  
42 Enterocolitis Awareness Day” in New Jersey.

43  
44 2. The Governor is respectfully requested to annually issue a  
45 proclamation recognizing May 17 as “Necrotizing Enterocolitis  
46 Awareness Day” in New Jersey, and to call upon public officials  
47 and citizens of this State to observe the day with appropriate  
48 activities and programs.

1       3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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5       This resolution designates May 17 of each year as NEC Awareness  
6 Day in the State of New Jersey.

7       Necrotizing Enterocolitis (NEC) is a devastating intestinal disease  
8 that can affect medically fragile infants. The condition causes  
9 inflammation and tissue damage which may lead to systemic infection,  
10 neurological complications, and developmental delays. Infants  
11 afflicted with NEC often require incubation, and can pass away within  
12 hours of a turn in their condition. Symptoms and risk factors may be  
13 as innocuous as low birthweight, poor blood circulation, blood  
14 oxygenation level, difficulty nursing, and the stress of the birthing  
15 process.

16       Despite limited public understanding for the inflammatory  
17 disorder, NEC is the third most common cause of hospitalization and  
18 death in neonatal infants. NEC affects one in 1,000 premature infants;  
19 its mortality rate is 20-30 percent and 42 percent for the smallest  
20 premature infants. The condition affects two to five percent of all  
21 premature infants but is responsible for up to 20 percent of Neonatal  
22 Intensive Care Unit costs.

23       Of those who survive the condition, 89 percent report long term  
24 complications including cardiac issues, motor skill loss, respiratory  
25 impairment, lost time at work, and hearing and vision challenges. The  
26 condition produces an increased risk of later functional impairment  
27 including cerebral palsy, fine and gross motor skill loss, and  
28 behavioral issues. Survivors experience poor executive function and  
29 worse working memory capacity over time.

30       Several social determinants of health contribute to NEC  
31 prevalence. Risk factors include maternal cocaine abuse, smoking,  
32 and congenital heart disease. Mode of birth delivery and formula  
33 feeding are other precursors to the disease.

34       NEC imposes a long-term financial burden on families and  
35 medical systems across the state and nation. When considering  
36 lifelong medical repercussions, NEC results in approximately \$5.8  
37 billion in U.S. hospital expenses each year, or 19 percent of neonatal  
38 healthcare expenditures and \$200,000 in costs for each infant receiving  
39 surgery. NEC is the second most costly morbidity of prematurity in  
40 the U.S., impacting families not only financially but emotionally as  
41 they cope with challenging pregnancies, unmet rehabilitation needs,  
42 frequent hospital readmittance, and repeated medical procedures upon  
43 birth.

44       With this in mind, it is in public interest for New Jersey citizens to  
45 increase their awareness of Necrotizing Enterocolitis and protective  
46 measures. Recognizing May 17 as a commemorative day for this  
47 condition, in keeping with the designated World NEC Awareness Day  
48 and California's recently proclaimed NEC Awareness Day, would  
49 commit public recognition to an under-acknowledged health concern.