

P.L. 2025, Joint Resolution No. 12, *approved December 19, 2025*
Senate Joint Resolution, No. 100

1 **A JOINT RESOLUTION** designating July of each year as “Cleft and
2 Craniofacial Awareness and Prevention Month.”
3
4 **WHEREAS**, Cleft lip and palate, together commonly called orofacial
5 clefts, are birth defects that occur when a baby’s lip or mouth do
6 not form properly during pregnancy; and
7 **WHEREAS**, A cleft lip occurs when the tissue that makes up the lip
8 does not join completely before birth and results in an opening in
9 the upper lip. The opening in the lip can be a small slit or it can be a
10 large opening that goes through the lip into the nose. A cleft lip can
11 be on one or both sides of the lip or in the middle of the lip; and
12 **WHEREAS**, A cleft palate occurs when the tissue that makes up the
13 roof of the mouth does not join together completely during
14 pregnancy. Some babies are born with both the front and back parts
15 of the palate open while others are born with only part of the palate
16 open; and
17 **WHEREAS**, Children with a cleft lip with or without a cleft palate or a
18 cleft palate alone often have problems with feeding and speaking
19 clearly and are prone to have ear infections, hearing problems, and
20 problems with their teeth; and
21 **WHEREAS**, About one in every 1,600 babies is born with cleft lip with
22 cleft palate in the United States; and
23 **WHEREAS**, About one in every 2,800 babies is born with cleft lip
24 without cleft palate in the United States; and
25 **WHEREAS**, About one in every 1,700 babies is born with cleft palate in
26 the United States; and
27 **WHEREAS**, The New Jersey State Health Assessment Data’s
28 (NJSHAD) most recent study regarding the prevalence of cleft lip
29 and cleft palate in children born to New Jersey resident mothers
30 identified births that took place between 2000-2019; and
31 **WHEREAS**, In 2019, the NJSHAD health indicator report of cleft lip
32 revealed that for every 10,000 live births 4.43 children born to New
33 Jersey resident mothers were born with cleft lip, with cleft palate;
34 and
35 **WHEREAS**, In 2019, the NJSHAD health indicator report of cleft
36 palate without cleft lip revealed that for every 10,000 live births
37 1.41 children born to New Jersey resident mothers were born with
38 cleft lip, without cleft palate; and
39 **WHEREAS**, The causes of orofacial clefts among most infants are
40 unknown and ongoing research is being conducted at the national
41 level to better understand the root causes; and

1 **WHEREAS**, Some children have a cleft lip or cleft palate because of
 2 changes in their genes while the presence of both a cleft lip and
 3 cleft palate are thought to be caused by additional factors, such as
 4 the consumption of certain food, drinks, or medicine or the
 5 exposure to certain environments by the mother during pregnancy;
 6 and

7 **WHEREAS**, Orofacial clefts, especially cleft lip with or without cleft
 8 palate, can be diagnosed during pregnancy by a routine ultrasound
 9 and can also be diagnosed after the baby is born. However,
 10 sometimes certain types of cleft palate, such as submucous cleft
 11 palate, might not be diagnosed until later in life; and

12 **WHEREAS**, Treatment options, such as surgery, are available to correct
 13 orofacial clefts; and

14 **WHEREAS**, Cleft lip and palate affects people worldwide, impacting
 15 speech, eating, and overall quality of life; and

16 **WHEREAS**, Raising awareness about cleft palate is essential to foster
 17 understanding, compassion, and support for individuals and
 18 families affected by this condition; and

19 **WHEREAS**, A Cleft and Craniofacial Awareness and Prevention Month
 20 will provide New Jerseyans with an annual reminder of the
 21 orofacial condition that affects thousands of individuals nationwide.
 22 It will also offer State community organizations an opportunity to
 23 increase public awareness of the condition through educational
 24 programming and outreach, and to develop resources for New
 25 Jersey residents and families dealing with cleft palate related
 26 challenges; and

27 **WHEREAS**, A Cleft and Craniofacial Awareness and Prevention Month
 28 will encourage and support State medical institutions, research
 29 centers, and advocacy groups to collaborate on research aimed at
 30 identifying the root causes of the orofacial condition and identify
 31 early intervention strategies to better assist New Jerseyans born
 32 with cleft palate and lip; now, therefore,

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 34 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the*
 35 *State of New Jersey:*

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 37 1. The month of July of each year is designated as “Cleft and
 38 Craniofacial Awareness and Prevention Month” in New Jersey to
 39 increase public awareness of the existence, causes, and treatments
 40 of cleft palate birth defects and to encourage State community
 41 organizations, medical institutions, research centers, and advocacy
 42 groups to collaborate to increase outreach efforts and research on
 43 the condition.

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 45 2. The Governor is respectfully requested to annually issue a
 46 proclamation recognizing the month of July of each year as “Cleft
 47 and Craniofacial Awareness and Prevention Month” in New Jersey,

1 and calling upon public officials and the citizens of this State to
2 observe the month with appropriate activities and programs.

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4 3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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9 This resolution designates July of each year as “Cleft and
10 Craniofacial Awareness and Prevention Month” in New Jersey.
11 Cleft lip and palate, together commonly called orofacial clefts, are
12 birth defects that occur when a baby’s lip or mouth do not form
13 properly during pregnancy. A cleft lip occurs when the tissue that
14 makes up the lip does not join completely before birth and results in
15 an opening in the upper lip. The opening in the lip can be a small
16 slit or it can be a large opening that goes through the lip into the
17 nose. A cleft palate occurs when the tissue that makes up the roof
18 of the mouth does not join together completely during pregnancy.
19 Some babies are born with both the front and back parts of the
20 palate open while others only part of the palate is open.

21 Children with a cleft lip with or without a cleft palate or a cleft
22 palate alone often have problems with feeding and speaking clearly
23 and are prone to have ear infections, hearing problems, and
24 problems with their teeth. About one in every 1,700 babies is born
25 with cleft palate in the United States. The causes of orofacial clefts
26 among most infants are unknown and ongoing research is being
27 conducted at the national level to better understand the root causes.

28 Cleft lip and palate affects people worldwide, impacting speech,
29 eating, and overall quality of life. Raising awareness about cleft
30 palate is essential to foster understanding, compassion, and support
31 for New Jersey residents and families affected by this condition, as
32 well as to encourage medical research aimed at identifying the root
33 cause of the orofacial disorder.

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38 Designates July of each year as “Cleft and Craniofacial
39 Awareness and Prevention Month” in NJ.