

JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 12

A JOINT RESOLUTION designating July of each year as “Cleft and Craniofacial Awareness and Prevention Month.”

WHEREAS, Cleft lip and palate, together commonly called orofacial clefts, are birth defects that occur when a baby’s lip or mouth do not form properly during pregnancy; and

WHEREAS, A cleft lip occurs when the tissue that makes up the lip does not join completely before birth and results in an opening in the upper lip. The opening in the lip can be a small slit or it can be a large opening that goes through the lip into the nose. A cleft lip can be on one or both sides of the lip or in the middle of the lip; and

WHEREAS, A cleft palate occurs when the tissue that makes up the roof of the mouth does not join together completely during pregnancy. Some babies are born with both the front and back parts of the palate open while others are born with only part of the palate open; and

WHEREAS, Children with a cleft lip with or without a cleft palate or a cleft palate alone often have problems with feeding and speaking clearly and are prone to have ear infections, hearing problems, and problems with their teeth; and

WHEREAS, About one in every 1,600 babies is born with cleft lip with cleft palate in the United States; and

WHEREAS, About one in every 2,800 babies is born with cleft lip without cleft palate in the United States; and

WHEREAS, About one in every 1,700 babies is born with cleft palate in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The New Jersey State Health Assessment Data’s (NJSHAD) most recent study regarding the prevalence of cleft lip and cleft palate in children born to New Jersey resident mothers identified births that took place between 2000-2019; and

WHEREAS, In 2019, the NJSHAD health indicator report of cleft lip revealed that for every 10,000 live births 4.43 children born to New Jersey resident mothers were born with cleft lip, with cleft palate; and

WHEREAS, In 2019, the NJSHAD health indicator report of cleft palate without cleft lip revealed that for every 10,000 live births 1.41 children born to New Jersey resident mothers were born with cleft lip, without cleft palate; and

WHEREAS, The causes of orofacial clefts among most infants are unknown and ongoing research is being conducted at the national level to better understand the root causes; and

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, A Cleft and Craniofacial Awareness and Prevention Month will provide New Jerseyans with an annual reminder of the orofacial condition that affects thousands of individuals nationwide. It will also offer State community organizations an opportunity to increase public awareness of the condition through educational programming and outreach,

and to develop resources for New Jersey residents and families dealing with cleft palate related challenges; and

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

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

C.36:2-488 as “Cleft and Craniofacial Awareness and Prevention Month” in New Jersey, July.

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

C.36:2-489 Annual proclamation.

2. The Governor is respectfully requested to annually issue a proclamation recognizing the month of July of each year as “Cleft and Craniofacial Awareness and Prevention Month” in New Jersey, and calling upon public officials and the citizens of this State to observe the month with appropriate activities and programs.

3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

Approved December 19, 2025.