

JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 16

A JOINT RESOLUTION designating the Saturday before Thanksgiving Day of each year as “National Adoption Day” and designating the month of November of each year as “National Adoption Month” in New Jersey.

WHEREAS, Around 115,000 children are adopted by American families each year, including private domestic adoptions, international adoptions, adoptions through the foster care system, and kinship legal guardianships, and approximately two million Americans have been adopted themselves; and

WHEREAS, In the United States, 400,000 children are in the foster care system daily with over 600,000 passing through the system annually ; and

WHEREAS, As of December of 2024, the Division of Child Protection and Permanency in the Department of Children and Families had 1,382 children in resource family and kinship care and 1,157 children in resource family and non-kinship care, totaling 2,539 children under the division’s care and supervision; and

WHEREAS, Throughout 2024, the division had 388 children exit out of home placement into adoption, part of a total of 1,586 children being discharged and exiting from the State’s foster care system; and

WHEREAS, Children in foster care may face physical, psychological, and emotional trauma throughout their lives, coupled with uncertainty and anxiety as they wait to return home, find a permanent home through adoption or kinship care, or to see what happens next; and

WHEREAS, The ongoing opioid crisis has increased the number of children entering foster care on a temporary basis, and has also limited the prospect of kinship guardianships as some otherwise suitable family members are disqualified for drug use; and

WHEREAS, Children whose biological parents’ rights have been terminated and are waiting for adoption spend an average of two and a half years in foster care before being adopted; and

WHEREAS, Almost one half of teenagers waiting to be adopted live in congregate care rather than foster family homes, and over 20,000 young people annually age out of foster care without the emotional and financial support necessary to succeed in life that a family can provide; and

WHEREAS, Since the 1990s, former Presiding Judge of Los Angeles County Michael Nash opened the court doors on Saturdays to finalize adoptions that were backlogged by bureaucratic excess and raise awareness for the thousands of children wanting for a safe, nurturing home environment; and

WHEREAS, Inspired by the initiative Judge Nash showed, county vicinages across the State of New Jersey and the country annually finalize adoptions at celebratory events in November by welcoming caregivers and children in their communities to celebrate together; and

WHEREAS, Throughout November, over 4,000 adoptions are finalized on National Adoption Day and in the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving; and

WHEREAS, Every adoption is unique, and every adoptive family has their own path and circumstances, but every adoption story begins with the compassion to love a child in need, to care for them unconditionally, and to watch them grow and prosper; and

WHEREAS, It is fitting and proper for the State of New Jersey to recognize the importance of adoption services and to celebrate the families and children that take part in this process; now, therefore,

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

C.36:2-496 “National Adoption Day,” Saturday before Thanksgiving; “National Adoption Month,” November.

1. The Saturday before Thanksgiving Day of each year is designated as “National Adoption Day” and the month of November of each year is designated as “National Adoption Month” in the State of New Jersey to raise public awareness of adoption services and the options available for prospective adoptive parents, and to celebrate the children and families that take part in the process by finalizing adoptions with special festivities throughout the month.

C.36:2-497 Annual proclamation.

2. The Governor is respectfully requested to annually issue a proclamation designating the Saturday before Thanksgiving Day as “National Adoption Day” and designating the month of November as “National Adoption Month” and shall call upon the public officials and citizens of this State to observe the day with appropriate activities and programs.

3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

Approved January 12, 2026.