Senate Resolution No. 2098

BY: Senator WEBB

MEMORIALIZING Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim the month of May 2026, as Hepatitis B Awareness Month in the State of New York

WHEREAS, Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus; current incidence estimates indicate that approximately 1.8 million Americans are infected with hepatitis B virus; and

WHEREAS, New York has one of the highest hepatitis B burdens in the nation, with a 2021 study estimating a prevalence of approximately 0.8%, ranking third among U.S. states; Queens County bears a disproportionate share of this burden, with an estimated 42,600 residents living with hepatitis B, the second-highest total among U.S. counties; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis B spreads from person to person via contact with infected blood and/or body fluids; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis B infection can range from an acute, mild, short-term illness to a chronic, serious, long-term infection that can lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer; and

WHEREAS, 85% of infants and 50% of older children and adults with hepatitis B are asymptomatic and about 1 in 2 people who have hepatitis B are unaware of their infection status; and

WHEREAS, Infants face an increased hepatitis B exposure risk through everyday contact and infected family members, and are susceptible to developing acute and serious health issues if they are infected at birth or in early childhood; and

WHEREAS, Infants exposed to hepatitis B have a 90% risk of developing chronic hepatitis B, greatly increasing their risk of developing serious liver conditions such as liver cancer or cirrhosis in their lifetime; and

WHEREAS, Treatment reduces the risk of serious conditions such as liver cancer or cirrhosis, but an estimated up to 75 percent of people who have hepatitis B in the U.S. and are eligible for treatment are not prescribed treatment, including 40% of those with advanced liver disease; and

WHEREAS, To safeguard infant health, in 1991, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) issued its first universal hepatitis B birth dose recommendation, which led to the implementation of the universal hepatitis B vaccination program in 1992 in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Before the universal hepatitis B birth dose recommendation, around 18,000 children in the United States were infected each year by hepatitis B virus before their 10th birthday; and

WHEREAS, From 1990 to 2019, the universal hepatitis B birth dose recommendation led to a 99% decline in reported cases of acute hepatitis B in children and young adults and averted an estimated 90,100 deaths in the United States: and

WHEREAS, The ACIP ended this universal hepatitis B birth dose recommendation in 2025 and now recommends it for infants born to women who tested positive for the hepatitis B virus or whose status is unknown, limiting other infants to a recommendation for shared clinical decision-making; and

WHEREAS, Public health analyses suggest that skipping or delaying the hepatitis B birth dose could result in thousands of preventable hepatitis B infections and hundreds of millions in avoidable healthcare costs in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Amidst these changes, several states have reaffirmed their support for a universal hepatitis B birth dose; and

WHEREAS, These state level changes are beneficial to the public health landscape and prosperity of those states; and

WHEREAS, Given existing shortfalls in annual hepatitis B screening practices, despite a universal hepatitis B screening recommendation for pregnant women, vaccination remains the safest and most effective way to proactively safeguard public health and prevent the devastating effects of hepatitis B infection; and

WHEREAS, Given existing gaps related to linkage to care for people who have hepatitis B, greater awareness of and access to hepatitis B screening and treatment options is needed to protect the health and well-being of individuals across New York; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim May 2026, as Hepatitis B Awareness Month in the State of New York, and to urge the citizens of this great Empire State to learn about the causes, symptoms, diagnoses and treatments for Hepatitis B; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New York.