

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 53

Introduced by Assembly Member Price

March 23, 2009

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 53—Relative to Autism Awareness Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 53, as introduced, Price. Autism Awareness Month.

This measure would declare April 2009 as Autism Awareness Month and recognize that individuals with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are valued and important members of society. This measure would recognize the parents and relatives of individuals with ASDs for their sacrifice and dedication in providing for the special needs of individuals with ASDs. This measure would also declare the Legislature's continued support of the work of specified organizations related to ASDs.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, Autism is a complex neurobiological disorder that
- 2 typically lasts throughout a person's lifetime. It is part of a group
- 3 of disorders known as autism spectrum disorders (ASDs); and
- 4 WHEREAS, Autism and ASDs are neurodevelopmental
- 5 disorders of unknown etiology that may cause significant
- 6 impairments in language, communications, and social interactions,
- 7 abnormalities in behaviors, and other physical manifestations; and
- 8 WHEREAS, ASDs are abnormalities of brain development and
- 9 function that are typically diagnosed during the first three years
- 10 of life, are four times more likely to occur in males than females,

1 and impact all segments of California’s population regardless of
2 race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or other factors; and

3 WHEREAS, ASDs now impact one out of every 150 children
4 in the United States and are the fastest growing serious
5 developmental disability, making these disorders more common
6 than pediatric cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined; and

7 WHEREAS, Most school districts in California have seen a
8 doubling of students with ASDs in the past five years. The number
9 of Californians with ASDs who are served by the State Department
10 of Developmental Services now exceeds 35,000, which is a number
11 that has more than tripled since 1998 and has increased more than
12 twelvefold since 1987; and

13 WHEREAS, Many Californians are not adequately informed
14 about ASDs and the value and importance of early identification,
15 assessment, and treatment of these disorders; and

16 WHEREAS, Individuals with ASDs and their families in
17 underserved populations face tremendous and overwhelming
18 challenges in accessing and navigating the complex programs and
19 services for these disorders; and

20 WHEREAS, Parents and family members have made invaluable
21 contributions through their commitment, caring, and advocacy to
22 important advances in research, education, and treatment for
23 individuals with ASDs; and

24 WHEREAS, California has been the established leader in
25 providing services and supports for the early identification,
26 assessment, intervention, education, and treatment of individuals
27 with ASDs that began with the passage of landmark state legislation
28 such as the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act
29 of 1969 and Assembly Bill 3854 (1974, Burton), relating to autism
30 and public education; and

31 WHEREAS, In 2005, Senator Perata authored Senate Concurrent
32 Resolution 51 (Resolution Chapter 124 of the Statutes of 2005)
33 that established, with the support of Assembly Speaker Núñez and
34 bipartisan backing, the Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on
35 Autism, which is comprised of, among others, Senator Darrel
36 Steinberg as chairperson, and Dr. Barbara Firestone, President and
37 CEO of The Help Group, as vice chairperson, to identify gaps in
38 programs and services related to the education and treatment of
39 children, adolescents, transitional youth, and adults with ASDs,
40 and to provide recommendations that will contribute to the

1 development of a comprehensive and integrated continuum of
2 programs, services, and funding; and

3 WHEREAS, In 2006, Assembly Member Pavley authored
4 Assembly Bill 2513 (Chapter 783 of the Statutes of 2006), which
5 was sponsored and supported by the California School Boards
6 Association, California Association of Suburban School Districts,
7 and the Association of California School Administrators, directed
8 by the Superintendent of Public Instruction to establish the
9 Superintendent’s Autism Advisory Committee (SAAC), and
10 required this multidisciplinary advisory group to develop
11 recommendations by which public and nonpublic schools, including
12 charter schools, can better serve pupils with autism and their
13 parents; and

14 WHEREAS, The Budget Act of 2006 provided additional
15 funding that expanded the ASDs initiative to include additional
16 professional training and development, state and regional ASDs
17 resource centers, expansion of ASDs support staff, and the
18 development, publication, and dissemination of “ASD: Best
19 Practice Guidelines for Treatment and Interventions”; and

20 WHEREAS, In 2007, Senator Steinberg authored Senate
21 Concurrent Resolution 42 (Resolution Chapter 50 of the Statutes
22 of 2007) which proclaimed April 2007 as Autism Awareness
23 Month, and acknowledged the contributions made in the area of
24 early autism and ASDs intervention treatment; and

25 WHEREAS, The State Department of Developmental Services,
26 the regional centers for individuals with developmental disabilities,
27 the State Department of Education and local school districts, the
28 State Department of Health Care Services, and the Centers for
29 Autism Developmental Disabilities Research and Epidemiology
30 (CADDRE) Network are committed to improving the quality of
31 life for individuals with ASDs; and

32 WHEREAS, The University of California, Davis M.I.N.D.
33 Institute, launched in 1998 with inspiration from the parent
34 community and with funding from the California State Legislature,
35 is now recognized internationally as a premier research institution
36 that is advancing our knowledge of ASDs and other
37 neurodevelopmental disorders; and

38 WHEREAS, First 5 California has made the issue of autism for
39 children who are five years of age and younger an important
40 priority, including the First 5 California Special Needs Project,

1 which indicates that 19 percent of children suffer from
2 developmental delays or disabilities that are frequently undetected
3 by routine examinations during the first five years of life; and

4 WHEREAS, The Help Group, the Autism Society of America,
5 Autism Speaks, Families for Early Autism Treatment (FEAT),
6 Disability Rights California, and other nonprofit organizations
7 contribute to the well-being of individuals with autism and their
8 families; and

9 WHEREAS, The University of California, Los Angeles is
10 recognized as a Center of Excellence in autism by the National
11 Institutes of Health and has made significant contributions to the
12 field; and

13 WHEREAS, The Special Needs Network, Inc. (SNN) is a
14 community-based organization founded to respond to the needs
15 of low-income and poor families struggling with raising a child
16 or adult with developmental disabilities, particularly as it relates
17 to autism; and

18 WHEREAS, SNN will celebrate World Autism Awareness Day
19 (WAAD) on April 2, 2009, and Autism Awareness Month in April
20 2009; and

21 WHEREAS, WAAD shines a bright light on autism as a growing
22 global health crisis. WAAD activities help to increase and develop
23 world knowledge of the autism epidemic and impart information
24 regarding the importance of early diagnosis and early intervention;
25 and

26 WHEREAS, Current scientific research demonstrates that the
27 early identification and intervention of children with ASDs can
28 result in significant positive outcomes in many children with ASDs;
29 and

30 WHEREAS, Public information and awareness efforts are of
31 paramount importance in accelerating early identification efforts
32 and the proliferation of early intervention programs and services;
33 now, therefore, be it

34 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
35 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature affirms its commitment
36 to the important issues described in this resolution by declaring
37 April 2009 as Autism Awareness Month in California and
38 emphasizes that each and every individual with an ASD is a valued
39 and important member of our society; and be it further

1 *Resolved*, That the Legislature recognizes and commends the
2 parents and relatives of individuals with ASDs for their sacrifice
3 and dedication in providing for the special needs of individuals
4 with ASDs; and be it further

5 *Resolved*, That the Legislature continues to support the important
6 work of the Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism, the
7 Superintendent’s Autism Advisory Committee, The Help Group,
8 the University of California, Davis M.I.N.D. Institute, First 5
9 California, Families for Early Autism Treatment (FEAT), Disability
10 Rightd California, the Autism Society of America, Autism Speaks,
11 the State Department of Health Care Services, Centers for Autism
12 Developmental Disabilities Research and Epidemiology
13 (CADDRE) Network, the State Council on Developmental
14 Disabilities, the Special Needs Network, and others; and be it
15 further

16 *Resolved*, That the Legislature stresses the need to identify
17 children with ASDs and to begin early intervention services
18 immediately after a child has been diagnosed with autism, and that
19 those services, interventions, and supports for individuals with
20 ASDs and their families must be provided in an integrated,
21 seamless, comprehensive, individually focused, and culturally
22 competent manner that are delivered for the duration of the
23 individual’s lifespan; and be it further

24 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
25 of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.