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For Immediate Release

New Jersey Forms State Task Force on Epilepsy

Trenton, NJ – Governor Chris Christie has signed a bill to establish a statewide task force on epilepsy. The task force will develop recommendations to educate the public and healthcare professionals about epilepsy and treatments as well as to address the psychosocial issues, such as depression, discrimination and stigmatization. The Act (S1928) was sponsored by Senator Fred Madden, Jr. (D-4) and Senator Diane Allen (R-7). The signing took place less than a month after the Senate and Assembly passed the bill in early July.

The Task Force will consist of eleven members including the Commissioners of Health and Senior Services and Human Services, two neurologists, a representative from the Epilepsy Foundation of New Jersey, two representatives from agencies who serve people with epilepsy, two members who have epilepsy and two expert members in the field of epilepsy.

“The creation of this task force is exciting because it recognizes that people with Epilepsy and their families are beginning to receive the attention that they deserve,” said Andrea Racioppi, Associate Director of the Epilepsy Foundation.

Epilepsy is defined as a disorder that causes a pattern of recurring seizures. About 125,000 New Jersey residents have epilepsy, and in 70% of the cases, no known cause exists. Modern treatment can control seizures in about 85% of cases, however the public often perceives epilepsy as a sign of intellectual disability, mental illness or aggression. This has resulted in a 30% unemployment rate in adults with seizures, even though they are physically able to work.

The statewide task force on epilepsy will be established in response to the need for more research to discover the cause of epilepsy, to improve the diagnostic strategies and to develop new drugs in order to improve the quality of life for those living with epilepsy. The task force will also work to dispel myths and rumors about seizures with the aim of breaking the stigma of epilepsy.

Epilepsy Foundation of New Jersey, (EFNJ) an affiliate of the National Epilepsy Foundation, provides programs for families living with epilepsy, such as a residential summer camp, support groups, scholarships, and referral programs. EFNJ also offers free of charge educational presentations about seizure recognition and first aid training.

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