

Department and to examine ways to maximize existing resources to raise hepatitis C virus awareness; requiring the Department to implement a certain report as funds are available; requiring the Department to implement certain provisions of this Act as funds are available; requiring the Department to make a certain annual report to the Governor and certain committees of the General Assembly; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the hepatitis C virus.

BY adding to

Article – Health – General

Section 18–1001 through 18–1009, inclusive, and 18–1002 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 10. Hepatitis C Advisory Council Virus”

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2005 Replacement Volume and 2005 Supplement)

Preamble

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C is a silent killer, being largely asymptomatic until irreversible liver damage may have occurred; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C has been characterized by the World Health Organization as a disease of primary concern to humanity; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C currently infects approximately 4.5 million persons in the United States, and each year there are some 30,000 new infections nationwide; and

WHEREAS, The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that approximately 12,000 persons die annually from the consequences of hepatitis C, and this number continues to grow each year; and

WHEREAS, The disease is considered to be such a public health threat that the United States Department of Health and Human Services has initiated a comprehensive plan to address this significant health problem, beginning with the identification of, and notification to, hundreds of thousands of persons who are inadvertently exposed to hepatitis C through blood transfusions; and

WHEREAS, In the absence of a vaccine for hepatitis C, emphasis must be placed on other means of awareness and prevention of this disease, including, but not limited to, education of persons at high risk for hepatitis C as defined by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as police officers, firefighters, health care workers, and the general public; and

WHEREAS, Educating the public and health care community throughout the State about hepatitis C will ensure an optimal approach to controlling this lethal disease; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows: