

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION directing the Cabinet for Health and Family
2 Services to examine Kentucky's recent response to the hepatitis A outbreak and make
3 recommendations to make future responses to outbreaks more effective.

4 WHEREAS, hepatitis A is an infectious liver disease typically resulting in mild
5 illness but sometimes causing nausea, jaundice, fever, fatigue, and possibly liver failure;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, hepatitis A is particularly dangerous for persons with existing medical
8 conditions; and

9 WHEREAS, since 1995, the hepatitis A vaccine has led to fewer outbreaks in the
10 United States; and

11 WHEREAS, since the late 1990s, Kentucky experienced only about 20 cases of
12 hepatitis A per year; and

13 WHEREAS, at the time of the declaration of the outbreak on November 22, 2017,
14 approximately 5 new cases were appearing in Kentucky each week; and

15 WHEREAS, the outbreak started in Louisville, moved to Ashland and the Boyd
16 county area and then spread to most counties throughout the state, but disproportionately
17 in eastern Kentucky; and

18 WHEREAS, by February 2019, the Kentucky outbreak of hepatitis A grew to be the
19 largest in the United States with more than 4,100 known cases of illness, resulting in the
20 hospitalization of 2,000 people, and the death of 43 people; and

21 WHEREAS, the focus by the Department for Public Health has been on the
22 vaccination of individuals at highest risk of transmission -- substance users and homeless
23 persons -- but hepatitis A has spread beyond these high risk populations; and

24 WHEREAS, despite making more vaccine available across the state, some local
25 health departments have reported shortages of hepatitis A vaccine and shortages of nurses
26 to administer the vaccine; and

27 WHEREAS, Louisville was able to contain its outbreak in half of the time and with

1 one-twentieth of the resources of cities with similar size outbreaks of hepatitis A; and

2 WHEREAS, despite an incredibly tight budget, the United States Centers for
3 Disease Control and Prevention declared Louisville's response as the gold standard for
4 affected states; and

5 WHEREAS, Kentucky was the first state to experience a significant hepatitis A
6 outbreak in rural communities; and

7 WHEREAS, Kentucky and other states and municipalities may benefit from the
8 assessment of Kentucky's collective outbreak response; and

9 WHEREAS, Kentucky could also learn from the responses of other states to similar
10 hepatitis A outbreaks; and

11 WHEREAS, Kentucky could improve its response to future outbreaks by examining
12 whether action should have been taken more quickly, more resources should have been
13 leveraged to provide vaccine, whether access to the vaccine should have been more
14 adequately distributed geographically, whether the current statutory and regulatory
15 environment allows for appropriate outbreak responses, whether the current emergency
16 declaration abilities are adequate, and whether a public health emergency should have
17 been declared;

18 NOW, THEREFORE,

19 ***Be it resolved by the Senate of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of***
20 ***Kentucky, the House of Representatives concurring therein:***

21 ➔Section 1. The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is directed to examine
22 Kentucky's recent response to the hepatitis A outbreak, consult with directors of local
23 health departments, and make recommendations to the General Assembly to ensure that
24 future responses to outbreaks are more effective. The General Assembly urges the
25 Cabinet for Health and Family Services to improve its plans to respond to future
26 outbreaks of disease by planning to take early and effective action, to utilize available
27 resources efficiently, and to provide adequate geographical distribution of vaccine in

1 order to avoid the unnecessary spread of illness and prevent the deaths of Kentuckians.

2 ➔Section 2. The Cabinet shall submit findings and legislative recommendations
3 to the Legislative Research Commission by November 30, 2019. The Legislative
4 Research Commission shall refer the recommendations to the appropriate committee or
5 committees of jurisdiction in advance of the 2020 Regular Session of the Kentucky
6 General Assembly.