

(H. B. 1879)

**(No. 51)**

(Approved January 30, 2006)

## **AN ACT**

To create the Vaccination Program for officers of the Puerto Rico Police who, as a result of their duties, are responsible for making arrests, or intervening with arrested persons, in order to provide that these officers be vaccinated free of cost against hepatitis in all its modalities.

### **STATEMENT OF MOTIVES**

Hepatitis B is a contagious disease caused by a virus that attacks the liver. The hepatitis A virus is commonly transmitted from person to person by oral, sexual or other sorts of contact. This disease may show different symptoms, among which are the following, headache, weakness, general discomfort, nausea, vomiting, fever, yellowish skin color, and others.

It is estimated that in Puerto Rico there is a high number of persons who have contracted some type of hepatitis, many of whom are not receiving medical treatment for their condition. Some types of hepatitis are transmitted by mere contact with a contagious person, which constitutes a risk for those persons who, in one way or another must interact with a contagious person, as is the case of police officers who intervene in an arrest and are forced to struggle with the person arrested.

In Puerto Rico there are approximately 100,000 persons infected with the hepatitis C virus, along with 49 % of the penal population that suffers from that condition. Hepatitis B is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis B virus. Hepatitis B can affect anyone. Experts in epidemiology indicate that

some infected persons never eliminate the virus and are at risk of suffering from cirrhosis (scar tissue) of the liver and liver cancer. Each year, some 5,000 person will die from this chronic disease (which last a lifetime).

In the case of infectious hepatitis (viral), a good hygiene is necessary to avoid infecting others. The hepatitis A virus may be easily spread through food that is handled by infected persons or through contact with infected persons. For this reason, persons suffering from hepatitis A should wash their hands well after using the bathroom and should not touch food at work. The hepatitis B and C viruses are transmitted through sexual contact and the blood.

In our Island, the members of the Puerto Rico Police have the responsibility of making arrests or intervening with arrested persons as part of the duties inherent to their position. These officers risk their lives and health when they come into contact with persons who could be infected with hepatitis, reason for which this Act should be approved so as to extend an additional protection to these law enforcement officers and prevent them from being infected with hepatitis.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF PUERTO RICO:**

Section 1.- This Act shall be known as “Puerto Rico Police Officers Hepatitis Vaccination Program.”

Section 2.- The Department of Health is hereby directed to establish a hepatitis vaccination program, free of cost, for the members of the Puerto Rico Police and the civilian personnel whose duties require the making of arrests or intervening with arrested persons. Provided, however that these vaccines shall be administered in the work areas of the members of the Puerto Rico Police and of the civilian personnel, in coordination with the Superintendent of the Puerto Rico Police.

Section 3.- The Department of Health is hereby empowered to establish, through regulations, the vaccines that shall be administered to comply with the purposes of this Act, as well as the frequency with which said vaccines shall be administered.

Section 4.- The sum of one hundred and sixty thousand (160,000) dollars is hereby appropriated to the Puerto Rico Police from unencumbered funds in the general budget, to be used for the vaccination of those police officers who, at the time of the approval of this Act, have not been vaccinated. Provided, that the Puerto Rico Police shall use the appropriated funds in the course of one year, as of the effectiveness of this Act.

Section 5.- For subsequent years, the Puerto Rico Police shall include the funds needed for the operation of the Vaccination Program in its operating budget.

Section 6.- This Act shall take effect as of July 1, 2006.

## CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following Act No. 51 (H.B.1879) of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the 15<sup>th</sup> Legislature of Puerto Rico:

**AN ACT** to create the Vaccination Program for officers of the Puerto Rico Police who, as a result of their duties, are responsible for making arrests, or intervening with arrested persons, in order to provide that these officers be vaccinated free of cost against hepatitis in all its modalities,

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, today 10<sup>th</sup> of May of 2006.

Francisco J. Domenech  
Director