

# S. RES. XX

Recognizing the significance of Sjögren’s as a systemic autoimmune disease and designating April as “Sjögren’s Awareness Month.”

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES  
April X, 2023

Ms. SENATOR submitted the following resolution, which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

## RESOLUTION

Recognizing the significance of Sjögren’s as a serious and systemic autoimmune disease and designating April as “Sjögren’s Awareness Month.”

Whereas up to 4 million adults in the United States are living with Sjögren’s disease;

Whereas Sjögren’s is a systemic autoimmune disease that affects the entire body –

- (1) symptoms include extensive dryness throughout the body, including the eyes and mouth, profound fatigue, and chronic pain;
- (2) the average age for diagnosis is currently between the ages of 45 and 55, although Sjögren’s can affect all ages; and
- (3) the female to male ratio for Sjögren’s diagnosis is approximately 9:1;

Whereas the cause of Sjögren’s is not known, and there is no single test to diagnosis the disease;

Whereas Sjögren’s is not easily treated and is primarily palliative, with over-the-counter products used to manage dryness symptoms along with off-label prescriptions for anti-inflammatory and disease-modifying therapies;

Whereas individuals living with Sjögren’s are often subjected to higher out-of-pocket costs, in order to afford medications to control inflammation and dryness, relieve joint, muscle and nerve pain, reduce acid reflux due to limited saliva production, and treat the devastating complications of oral and other dryness;

Whereas rheumatologists primarily treat individuals with Sjögren’s, a wide variety of specialists are involved, including dentists, neurologists, ocular specialists, otolaryngologists, gastroenterologists, nephrologists, and pulmonologists, among others;

Whereas the physical and psychological impact of Sjögren's can severely affect an individual's duties at home and in the workplace;

Whereas there is a need to update the nomenclature to classify Sjögren's as a disease;

Whereas there is a need for more research to understand the pathology that leads to the autoimmune attack in Sjögren's, including the role of the interplay of the immune and nervous systems;

Whereas clinical trials are underway to test the efficacy of targeted therapies that will address the cause of Sjögren's;

Whereas research is underway to identify genes and environmental influences that may contribute to understanding who is susceptible to Sjögren's;

Whereas more research is needed to identify new therapies to help individuals with Sjögren's manage the symptoms and complications as they age:

Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, The Senate –

- (1) designates April as “Sjögren's Awareness Month”;
- (2) recognizes the importance of Sjögren's as a serious health issue that causes a significant health burden;
- (3) encourages the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and National Institutes of Health –
  - a. to consider the public health benefit of expanding dental coverage to this population;
  - b. to identify new areas of research to improve the understanding of the causes and identify biomarkers that will help with patient stratification and diagnosis, disease management, and development of targeted therapies for Sjögren's patients;
  - c. to better quantify the number of patients suffering from Sjögren's as many are believed to be undiagnosed or are misdiagnosed;
  - d. to update and disseminate literature on Sjögren's to public health professionals to increase awareness for the condition; and
  - e. to build awareness among physicians and communities in underserved areas so that patients are diagnosed correctly and obtain needed care
- (4) respectfully requests the Secretary of the Senate transmit an enrolled copy of this resolution to the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Administrator for the

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and the Director of the National Institutes of Health.

DRAFT