

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 84

BY SENATOR FRED MILLS

A RESOLUTION

To create and provide for the Year-Round Healthy Child Task Force within the Louisiana Department of Health.

WHEREAS, childhood is a critical period of growth and development and a child's experiences, behaviors, and health problems can have long-term impacts; and

WHEREAS, protecting and improving the health, safety, and well-being of children is of fundamental importance; and

WHEREAS, to grow and develop optimally, children need adequate nutrition, they need to be healthy, they must feel safe and secure, and they must have opportunities for learning; and

WHEREAS, it is essential that children learn healthy habits, such as handwashing, getting sufficient sleep, and eating nutritious meals; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana was deemed one of the worst states for child well-being in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2022 Kids Count Data Book, which ranked Louisiana forty-nine out of fifty in child well-being based on economic well-being, education, health, family, and community; and

WHEREAS, exercise is essential, no matter the season, to help children maintain strong muscles and bones, build cardiovascular strength, reduce the risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes, and improve mental health; and

WHEREAS, winter brings shorter, colder days and, typically, much more time spent indoors doing sedentary activities; and

WHEREAS, a recent study among children six to nine years of age showed that physical activity dropped by fifty-three percent during the summer months; and

WHEREAS, declines in physical activity can have adverse effects on children's health with excess weight gain leading to obesity and poorer metabolic, cardiovascular, respiratory, and mental health for children, making physical activity all year long critical for children's health; and

WHEREAS, according to the National Survey of Children's Health, over thirty-seven percent of children in Louisiana are overweight or obese; and

WHEREAS, one of the greatest impediments to physical activity is lack of access to quality recreational spaces and facilities; and

WHEREAS, all across the United States, communities are using the power of a joint use agreement to provide public access to indoor and outdoor school facilities during non-school hours; and

WHEREAS, children can face a lot of stressful situations every day, including homework, tests, and social pressures, and research shows that stress and anxiety can have a negative impact on their health, just like it can on the health of adults; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, according to the National Survey of Children's Health, almost seventy-eight percent of children in Louisiana needed mental health care; and

WHEREAS, making sure children get enough sleep is a crucial part of keeping them healthy and lack of sleep can lead to poor concentration, obesity, depression, suicidal ideation, and injuries; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, according to the National Survey of Children's Health, over half of Louisiana children did not receive the recommended number of hours of sleep; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana consistently faces some of the highest rates of hunger in the country particularly amongst children and seniors; and

WHEREAS, according to the United States Department of Agriculture, one in six Louisiana households struggles to put food on the table; and

WHEREAS, Feeding America estimates that one in four Louisiana children live in households that are food insecure, and in several rural parishes one-third of children are food insecure; and

WHEREAS, children's access to health care is critical and can influence children's physical and emotional health, growth, and development and their capacity to reach their full potential as adults; and

WHEREAS, all children are at increased risk of developing preventable conditions if appropriate care is not provided when they are sick or injured and their lives and the lives of their families can be affected for many years; and

WHEREAS, Medicaid was the greatest source of health insurance coverage for Louisiana children in 2019, covering over fifty-one percent and providing access to hospital care, doctor visits, prescription drugs, medicine, and more; and

WHEREAS, strategies focused on children's health and safety throughout the year in early childhood education programs, at school, and in their families and neighborhoods can help improve health outcomes for children; and

WHEREAS, investing in the health and well-being of Louisiana children is one of the most important things this state can do to build a better future.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby establish and provide for the Year-Round Healthy Child Task Force, within the Louisiana Department of Health, to study ways to protect and improve the health, safety, and well-being of Louisiana children throughout the entire year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force should include consideration of ways to improve and protect the physical and mental health of Louisiana children by adapting local and state policies and procedures to increase access to necessary and preventative health care, good nutrition, and beneficial exercise throughout the entire calendar year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall consist of the following members:

- (1) The chairman of the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare, or his designee.
- (2) The chairman of the Senate Committee on Education, or his designee.
- (3) The director of the Louisiana Department of Health, bureau of minority health access, or his designee.
- (4) The state Medicaid director, or his designee.
- (5) The assistant secretary of family support of the Department of Children and Family Services, or his designee.
- (6) The president of the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, or his designee.
- (7) The executive director of the Pennington Biomedical Research Center, or his designee.

(8) The president of the Louisiana Hospital Association, or his designee.

(9) The executive director of the Louisiana Rural Health Association, or his designee.

(10) A representative of the Louisiana Managed Medicaid Association, appointed by the board of directors of the Louisiana Managed Medicaid Association.

(11) The executive director of the Police Jury Association of Louisiana, or his designee.

(12) The executive director of the Louisiana Municipal Association, or his designee.

(13) A healthcare provider with experience in treating children, appointed by the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each designating authority shall submit the names of designees to the task force to the Louisiana Department of Health no later than August 1, 2023.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the task force shall convene for its first meeting no later than September 1, 2023, at the call of the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health, and at the first meeting, the members shall elect a chairman and other officers as the task force may deem appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in conducting this study the task force will seek input and advice from the following:

(1) Healthcare professionals with experience in treating children, including but not limited to pediatricians, family practitioners, and nurses.

(2) Mental health professionals with experience in treating children, including but not limited to child psychologists, social workers, and school counselors.

(3) Education professionals, including but not limited to teachers and principals.

(4) Public, private, and charitable organizations with experience in addressing the health, safety, and well-being of Louisiana children.

(5) Parents and other caregivers of children.

(6) Any other interested stakeholder.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a majority of the task force shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. All official actions of the task force shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of the members.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of the task force shall serve without compensation, except per diem or expenses reimbursement to which they may be individually entitled as members of their constituent organizations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall provide a written report of findings and recommendations, including any specific proposals for legislation, to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare, and to the David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library as required by R.S. 24:771 and 772, no later than February 1, 2024.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall terminate on the date of the submission of its report or February 1, 2024, whichever occurs first.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the Senate Health and Welfare Committee, the Senate Education Committee, the Louisiana Department of Health, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, Pennington Biomedical Research Center, the Louisiana Hospital Association, the Louisiana Rural Health Association, the Louisiana Managed Medicaid Association, the Police Jury Association of Louisiana, and the Louisiana Municipal Association.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE