

2023 Regular Session

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 136

BY SENATOR BOUDREAUX

HEALTH DEPARTMENT. Urges and requests the Louisiana Department of Health to assist in the development of a public service campaign to foster awareness and education on perinatal mental health care.

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health to assist in the development of a  
3 public service campaign to foster awareness and education on perinatal mental health  
4 care.

5 WHEREAS, more women die in the United States from complications of pregnancy  
6 and childbirth than in any other developed country in the world, with an average of three  
7 women dying each day in 2021; and

8 WHEREAS, according to a 2023 report from the Centers for Disease Control and  
9 Prevention, the number of women in the United States dying from maternal causes almost  
10 doubled between 2018 and 2021, from six hundred fifty-eight deaths in 2018 to over one  
11 thousand two hundred deaths in 2021; and

12 WHEREAS, black women in the United States are disproportionately impacted by  
13 complications from pregnancy and childbirth, being more than two and a half times more  
14 likely to die from complications of pregnancy and childbirth in 2021 as compared to white  
15 women; and

16 WHEREAS, mental health problems are the most common complication of  
17 pregnancy, affecting up to one in five women in the perinatal period, and as many as two in  
18 five women who are low income or persons of color; and

1           WHEREAS, in 2021, mental health-related conditions, namely suicide and overdose,  
2 were the leading cause of pregnancy-related deaths in the United States; and

3           WHEREAS, according to the 2017-19 Louisiana Pregnancy-Associated Mortality  
4 Review Report released in August 2022, the overall leading cause of pregnancy-associated  
5 deaths was accidental overdose, accounting for seventeen percent of the deaths that occurred  
6 during pregnancy or within one year of the end of the pregnancy; and

7           WHEREAS, mental health and substance use disorders during pregnancy and in the  
8 postpartum period often go unidentified and studies suggest that less than fifty percent of  
9 women with perinatal mental health problems are identified by their frontline physician; and

10          WHEREAS, women identified as experiencing perinatal mental health symptoms  
11 often do not receive treatment, with as many as seventy-five percent of women experiencing  
12 perinatal mental health symptoms going untreated; and

13          WHEREAS, despite the prevalence and risks, there is a lack of awareness of perinatal  
14 mental health and substance use disorders among family members, the public, and providers,  
15 and many mothers feel reluctant to report symptoms and concerns; and

16          WHEREAS, stigma has been seen as one of the leading barriers to accessing care  
17 and, as a result of stigma, fewer individuals seek treatment; and

18          WHEREAS, the mental health of women before, during, and after childbirth is an  
19 issue of great concern to those affected, their families, and their physicians; and

20          WHEREAS, when left untreated, mental health and substance use disorders in  
21 pregnancy and postpartum period can have serious medical, societal, and economic  
22 consequences; and

23          WHEREAS, children born to mothers with untreated mental health and substance use  
24 disorders are at increased risk for serious health, developmental, or behavioral conditions,  
25 which can affect their overall development and growth; and

26          WHEREAS, mental health and substance use disorders in pregnancy and the  
27 postpartum period are treatable, and better treatment outcomes are realized with early  
28 identification and intervention; and

29          WHEREAS, all of Louisiana has been designated as a mental health professional  
30 shortage area by the federal Human Resources and Services Administration and there is a

1 scarcity of mental health professionals available in Louisiana, especially psychiatrists, to  
2 treat perinatal mental health and substance use disorders; and

3 WHEREAS, primary care providers and mental health professionals often lack  
4 training in addressing the mental health needs of pregnant and postpartum women; and

5 WHEREAS, addressing perinatal mental health concerns has been identified as a  
6 critical need by the Louisiana Department of Health, the Louisiana Commission on Perinatal  
7 Care and the Prevention of Infant Mortality, the Louisiana Pregnancy-Associated Mortality  
8 Review, the Louisiana Pritzker Children's Initiative, and various other commissions,  
9 councils, and advisory boards in Louisiana; and

10 WHEREAS, in its 2017-19 Louisiana Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review  
11 Report, the Louisiana Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review Committee identified the  
12 following areas in its list of priorities for prevention of pregnancy-related and  
13 pregnancy-associated deaths: improve care coordination before, during, and after pregnancy;  
14 improve and expand identification and treatment for substance use and mental health during  
15 pregnancy; and ensure pregnant women receive the appropriate level of care based on their  
16 medical issues and risk factors; and

17 WHEREAS, the Louisiana Perinatal Mental Health Task Force, as enacted by House  
18 Concurrent Resolution No. 105 of the 2021 Louisiana Regular Legislative Session,  
19 recognized in its policy brief that while Louisiana has implemented key policy changes,  
20 program, and initiatives that have created forward momentum toward improving mental  
21 health outcomes for pregnant and postpartum women, more concerted policy and  
22 programmatic efforts are needed to sustain current efforts and to address system gaps and  
23 deep-rooted inequities in the healthcare structures; and

24 WHEREAS, Louisiana has implemented key policy changes that positively impact  
25 pregnant and postpartum women, including the extension of postpartum Medicaid coverage  
26 for twelve months after delivery, Medicaid reimbursement for caregiver depression  
27 screenings conducted during well-child visits, and the passage of Act No. 188, the Perinatal  
28 Mood and Anxiety Disorders Act, in the 2022 Louisiana Regular Legislative Session, which  
29 provides for information sharing by hospitals and birthing centers, perinatal mood disorder  
30 screening, mental health treatment, and collaborative care; and

1           WHEREAS, the Louisiana Perinatal Mental Health Task Force, as enacted by House  
2           Concurrent Resolution No. 105 in the 2021 Legislative Session, made the priority  
3           recommendation to expand mental health access for pregnant and postpartum women by  
4           promoting and investing long-term in a provider-to-provider mental health consultation and  
5           training program that builds the capacity of healthcare providers across the state to respond  
6           to the mental health needs of pregnant and postpartum women; and

7           WHEREAS, the federal Health Resources and Services Administration recognized  
8           the need and opportunity for the development of a mental health access program in  
9           Louisiana and provided funding to Louisiana Department of Health, office of public health,  
10          bureau of family health to develop a statewide provider-to-provider mental health  
11          consultation program that provides guidance, education, and care coordination support to  
12          perinatal and pediatric healthcare providers.

13          THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana  
14          does hereby urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health to assist in the  
15          development of a public service campaign to foster awareness and education on perinatal  
16          mental health care.

17          BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does  
18          hereby encourage mental healthcare providers and healthcare providers who provide care  
19          to pregnant and postpartum women to attend continuing education courses on perinatal  
20          mental health care.

21          BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does  
22          hereby express support for a statewide mental health consultation program that uses  
23          provider-to-provider consultation, education, and resource and referral support to enhance  
24          the capacity of frontline healthcare providers to identify, diagnose, treat, and refer pregnant  
25          and postpartum women with mental health or substance use concerns.

26          BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does  
27          hereby urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health to identify and seek long-term,  
28          sustainable sources of funding for a statewide mental health consultation program.

29          BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the  
30          Louisiana Department of Health.

