

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 11

BY SENATOR BOUDREAUX

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Department of Health and Hospitals to evaluate and report on access to vital records at parish health units.

WHEREAS, public access to essential vital records, namely birth certificates, is a core function of public service that should be provided by the Department of Health and Hospitals; and

WHEREAS, citizens need immediate access to birth certificates for a whole myriad of reasons, including but not limited to registration for children in day care, schools, camps, sports events and other recreational activities, job applications, passport applications, and other events that mark milestones in a person's life; and

WHEREAS, at one time it was believed that the Department of Health and Hospitals made immediate access to birth certificates available in most, if not all, parish health units throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, in recent years alternative access strategies have been attempted that eliminated immediate access to vital records in parish health units and instead offered citizens the opportunity to order a birth certificate via kiosk machine in nine parishes; provided immediate access through clerks of court in forty parishes; provided for Internet and phone ordering; and provided immediate walk-in service only at the New Orleans Vital Records Central Office; and

WHEREAS, the kiosks located in nine parish health units have proven to be difficult to manage in many instances, do not allow for customer assistance, and require the citizen to order a birth certificate electronically with an additional shipping and security fee in addition to the cost of the birth certificate; and

WHEREAS, the clerks of court provide immediate access to birth certificates in forty parishes, but at a fee of nine dollars more per record than what would have been paid in the parish health unit; and

WHEREAS, ordering a birth certificate on the phone or via the Internet also requires the citizen to pay additional shipping and security fees and wait for the vital record to be shipped; and

WHEREAS, the only location made available by the Department of Health and Hospitals for immediate walk-in service is the New Orleans Vital Records Office in Benson Tower which is not easily accessible by the public and does not offer free or convenient parking.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Health and Hospitals to evaluate and report on increasing access to vital records at parish health units.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department shall include in its evaluation data regarding the number of parish health units that previously provided for immediate access to vital records and the number of records produced by each parish health unit annually; the qualifications needed for a staff member at a parish health unit to print a vital record; and the cost of the contract with the kiosk vendor.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department should evaluate data to develop a proposal to increase immediate walk-in access to vital records at parish health units based on criteria established by the department if such access cannot be made available at all sixty-four parish health units, such as population or geographical location based.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of the department's evaluation and report on access to vital records at parish health units shall be submitted to the legislature no later than October 1, 2016.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Department of Health and Hospitals.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES