

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 123

BY SENATOR BOUDREAUX AND REPRESENTATIVES TERRY LANDRY, DUSTIN MILLER AND PIERRE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To designate June 11-15, 2018, as Meningitis B Awareness Week.

WHEREAS, meningococcal disease, more commonly referred to as bacterial meningitis, is any infection caused by the bacterium *Neisseria meningitidis*; and

WHEREAS, meningococcal disease is uncommon; however, when it strikes, its flu-like symptoms make diagnosis difficult; and

WHEREAS, meningococcal disease can cause serious illness such as infection of the lining of the brain and spinal column (meningitis) or blood infections (sepsis); the disease strikes quickly and can lead to severe or permanent disabilities, such as hearing loss, brain damage, seizures, limb amputation, and can even lead to death within 24 to 48 hours; and

WHEREAS, although one in ten people are carriers for this bacteria with no signs or symptoms of disease, sometimes *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria can cause illness; and

WHEREAS, there are different strains of bacterial meningitis, including serogroups A, C, W, Y, and B, and vaccines exist to help provide protection against all the serogroups commonly seen in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the single best way to help prevent all common strains of meningococcal disease is to be vaccinated with both a MenACWY vaccine and a separate MenB vaccine; and

WHEREAS, Meningococcal disease is spread from person to person via the exchange of the bacteria through respiratory and throat secretions during close or lengthy contact, such as sharing beverages or eating utensils, kissing, or spending time in close contact with someone who is sick or who carries the bacteria; and

WHEREAS, community settings in which large groups of people gather, like college campuses, can increase the risk of the spread of meningococcal disease; and

WHEREAS, because of the way meningitis is spread, through close personal contact, and that the social behavior of young adults ages 17-22 increases their risk of contracting the disease, students in dormitory settings and crowded events are particularly vulnerable to meningococcal disease; and

WHEREAS, while vaccines for serogroups A, C, W, and Y have been available for many years, prior to 2014, there were no vaccines available for serogroup B; and

WHEREAS, despite the existence of a serogroup B vaccine, there have been several recent outbreaks of serogroup B meningococcal disease on college campuses throughout the United States, with some cases resulting in death; and

WHEREAS, because the B strain of meningitis requires a new, separate vaccination, students heading to college may mistakenly think that if they received the A, C, W, and Y vaccine that they are protected against all strains and may not realize they are not protected against the B strain; and

WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control, *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup B accounts for approximately half of all meningococcal cases among persons aged 17-22 years in the United States; and

WHEREAS, vaccination for serogroups A, C, W and Y is routinely recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends that decisions to vaccinate adolescents and young adults 16 through 23 years of age against serogroup B meningococcal disease should be made at the individual level with healthcare providers; and

WHEREAS, R.S. 17:170 requires each person entering any school in Louisiana for the first time and each child entering the sixth grade to be vaccinated against certain vaccine-preventable diseases including meningococcal disease (serogroups A, C, W, and Y); and

WHEREAS, R.S. 17:170.2 requires each school board to provide information to parents and students relative to the risks associated with meningococcal disease and the availability, effectiveness, and known contraindications of immunization against the disease; and

WHEREAS, since 2006, R.S. 17:170.1 has required persons in Louisiana to provide satisfactory evidence of current immunization against meningococcal disease (serogroups A, C, W, and Y) as a condition of registration in courses at a public or nonpublic postsecondary education institution and requires those institutions to provide detailed information on the risks associated with the disease; and

WHEREAS, meningitis vaccines are covered by public and private insurance plans, and individuals are encouraged to contact their health insurance provider to determine coverage of MenACWY and MenB vaccines; and

WHEREAS, students, parents, educators, and healthcare providers need to know about all strains of meningitis and how to protect against them; and

WHEREAS, June is a time when students are preparing to go to college and can discuss how to become fully vaccinated with their healthcare provider.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby designate June 11-15, 2018 as Meningitis B Awareness Week.

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

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES