

2024 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 11

BY REPRESENTATIVES MOORE AND KNOX

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Louisiana Supreme Court Drug and Specialty Court program to study the connection between mental health issues, homelessness, and the criminal justice system and the effectiveness of behavioral health courts as an alternative to the traditional judicial system.

WHEREAS, studies have shown that people who suffer from mental illnesses are more likely to enter into the criminal justice system when they do not have access to quality behavioral health services in their communities; and

WHEREAS, national studies indicate that the rates of mental illness are consistently higher in the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, approximately half of the United States jail population and over one-third of the United States prison population were diagnosed with a mental illness in 2020; and

WHEREAS, between 2018 and 2019, five hundred twenty-one thousand people in Louisiana received mental health services the previous year; and

WHEREAS, over one-third of Louisiana's total incarcerated adult individuals were identified as receiving some level of mental health care in 2019; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Legislature enacted the "Mental Health Court Treatment Act" in 2013 which established mental health court treatment programs; and

WHEREAS, the program allows people with mental illnesses to serve their sentence on probation if they comply with certain requirements; and

WHEREAS, only three behavioral health courts have been launched, in the parishes of Calcasieu, Rapides, and St. Tammany; and

WHEREAS, homeless individuals may also be more likely to have mental health conditions which may increase their risk of involvement in the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, people with severe mental illness may be less able to cope with the stresses of homelessness or may perpetrate criminal acts that are manifestations of their illness; and

WHEREAS, in 2008, the rate of homelessness among jail inmates who had been homeless in the previous year and homeless at the time of incarceration was approximately 7.5 to 11.3 times the annual rate of homelessness in the general population; and

WHEREAS, it is important to understand the needs of Louisiana residents who are incarcerated and suffer from mental illness in order to understand the impact of untreated mental illnesses and the criminal justice system and to reduce recidivism.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Louisiana Supreme Court Drug and Specialty Court program to study the connection between mental health issues, homelessness, and the criminal justice system.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Louisiana Supreme Court Drug and Specialty Court program will survey or invite academic institutions of higher learning or policy institutes to present ideas on how they can assist with the study of the effectiveness, impact, and operational costs of the behavioral health courts in Calcasieu Parish, Rapides Parish, and St. Tammany Parish and report its findings and recommendations to the legislature thirty days prior to the convening of the 2025 Regular Session of the Legislature of Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any university partner in this state that wishes to contribute to this effort that is not solely focused on mental health, but also criminal justice, sociology, and political science, shall be ideally considered for participation in this study.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections and the Louisiana Department of Health shall provide information, as necessary, to produce the report requested in this Resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the judicial administrator of the Louisiana Supreme Court Drug and Specialty Court program.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Louisiana Supreme Court Drug and Specialty Court program shall submit one print copy and one electronic copy of any report produced pursuant to this Resolution to the David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library as required by R.S. 24:772.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE