

2017 Regular Session

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 21

BY SENATOR MIZELL

HEALTH CARE. Requests Louisiana medical schools, prescriber licensing boards, and prescriber trade associations to take all necessary steps to eliminate pain as the fifth vital sign and to increase prescriber education and awareness on assessing, identifying, and treating the symptom of pain.

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 To urge and request Louisiana medical schools, prescriber licensing boards, and prescriber
3 trade associations to take all necessary steps to eliminate pain as the fifth vital sign
4 and to increase prescriber education and awareness on assessing, identifying, and
5 treating the symptom of pain.

6 WHEREAS, according to the United States Centers for Disease Control and
7 Prevention, the opioid epidemic has seen pain pill overdoses quadruple nationwide since
8 2000 and triple in Louisiana since 1999, with Louisiana ranking sixth in the nation for
9 volume of pain pill prescriptions, generating more prescriptions per capita on an annual basis
10 than actual residents; and

11 WHEREAS, in the 1990s, due in part to aggressive advocacy from the
12 pharmaceutical manufacturers and misinformation that opioids were not as addictive as other
13 drugs, pain was recognized as the fifth vital sign, giving pain equal status with blood
14 pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate, and temperature as vital signs; and

15 WHEREAS, in clinical practice, pain as the fifth vital sign has proven to be more
16 complex to assess, evaluate, and manage than originally anticipated, as pain is a subjective
17 description by a patient based on prompts, often in the form of pain scale faces or other
18 imagery of unpleasantness, as opposed to the statistical tangible metrics generated by

1 assessing the other four vital signs; and

2 WHEREAS, establishing pain as the fifth vital sign has had serious consequences,
3 which although not necessarily intended, must be addressed at every level to prevent the
4 unprecedented number of Americans becoming addicted to prescription opioids,
5 transitioning to heroin to sustain their addictions, and dying untimely and unnecessarily; and

6 WHEREAS, the American Academy of Family Physicians and the American
7 Medical Society have both issued statements of position on this matter calling for the
8 removal of pain as the fifth vital sign.

9 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
10 commend the American Academy of Family Physicians and the American Medical Society
11 for taking a strong position on this matter and formalizing their commitment to remove pain
12 as the fifth vital sign.

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge
14 and request Louisiana medical schools, prescriber licensing boards, and prescriber trade
15 associations to take all necessary steps to eliminate pain as the fifth vital sign and to increase
16 prescriber education and awareness on assessing, identifying, and treating the symptom of
17 pain with the goal of reducing utilization of opioids to treat patient reported pain when
18 alternative forms of pain management would be sufficient.

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge
20 and request The Joint Commission, a nonprofit that accredits hospitals and other U.S.
21 healthcare organizations, to discontinue use of pain management as a measurement of
22 provider success and patient satisfaction, as such practice has directly contributed to the
23 increase in opioid prescriptions as well as resulted in a Medicare funding formula that
24 rewards high prescribers while penalizing those that attempt to reduce use of these highly
25 addictive and deadly drugs through arbitrarily contrived patient satisfaction surveys.

26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the
27 dean of the Louisiana State University School of Medicine at New Orleans, the dean of the
28 Louisiana State University School of Medicine at Shreveport, the dean of the Tulane
29 University School of Medicine, the executive director of the Louisiana State Board of
30 Medical Examiners, the executive director of the Louisiana State Board of Dentistry, the

1 executive director of the Louisiana State Board of Optometry Examiners, the executive
2 director of the Louisiana State Board of Nursing, the executive director of the Louisiana
3 Medical Society, the executive director of the Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians, the
4 executive director of the Louisiana Dental Association, the executive director of the
5 Optometry Association of Louisiana, the executive director of the Louisiana State Nurses
6 Association, and the president and chief executive officer of The Joint Commission.

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part
of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Christine Arbo Peck.

SCR 21 Original

DIGEST
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