

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 144

BY SENATOR MIZELL

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health and the attorney general to propose solutions to the shortage of SANE nurses throughout the state.

WHEREAS, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners, also known as SANE nurses, are registered nurses or advanced practice registered nurses that have been specifically trained to provide comprehensive care to sexual assault survivors in the emergency room; and

WHEREAS, SANE nurses are trained to conduct forensic medical examinations that include examination of physical trauma, patient interview, collection and evaluation of evidence, and medical specimen collection; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana has an alarmingly low number of SANE nurses, with only one hundred SANE nurses across the entire state, and only fifty-three of those are fully certified; and

WHEREAS, in the rural parts of the state, there are only a few SANE nurses tasked with serving vast areas and even in more densely populated areas of the state, there are simply not enough SANE nurses to meet the demand; and

WHEREAS, on any given night, a single SANE nurse may receive calls to provide care to sexual assault survivors at multiple hospitals in multiple parishes; and

WHEREAS, this shortage of SANE nurses creates delays in care, which leaves survivors without timely access to the specialized support they urgently need; and

WHEREAS, survivors of sexual assault can face wait times of five to six hours before they receive care from a trained SANE nurse; and

WHEREAS, in many emergency rooms, nurses without specific sexual assault exam training are often tasked with performing rape kit exams; and

WHEREAS, the overwhelming majority of sexual assault survivors are women and children who have just experienced a traumatic event and should not have to wait hours to receive care; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Department of Health, through the medical directors of each of its nine regional health service districts, is responsible for reviewing and approving an annual sexual assault response plan for each district; and

WHEREAS, a major component of the plan should be whether there are a sufficient number of SANE nurses in each region to provide timely care to sexual assault survivors; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Department of Health can utilize its relationship with hospitals, the Louisiana State Board of Nursing, and the Louisiana State Nurses Association to identify ways to increase the number of SANE nurses in the state and ensure there is adequate access to the vital services the SANE nurses provide; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Sexual Assault Oversight Commission is placed within the office of the attorney general and is tasked with developing recommendations for statewide standardized sexual assault collection kit and protocols for forensic medical examinations of victims of sexually oriented criminal offenses; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Department of Health and the attorney general should perform a critical assessment of the annual sexual assault response plan, including an evaluation of the current SANE nurse employment model to identify opportunities for increased access to SANE nurse services and propose solutions to ensure the sustainability of these critical services; and

WHEREAS, to improve access to sexual assault nurse examiners, there should be statewide coordination under the direction of the attorney general in consultation with the Louisiana Department of Health, with a specific focus on ensuring access to services provided by sexual assault nurse examiners in rural areas.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby request the Louisiana Department of Health and the attorney general to do the following:

(1) Work with stakeholders to identify ways to increase the number of SANE nurses in the state to ensure adequate access to the vital services provided by SANE nurses.

(2) Assess the current annual sexual assault response plan and SANE nurse employment model to identify opportunities for increased access to SANE nurse services and propose solutions to ensure the sustainability of these critical services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the attorney general should pursue grant funding to support statewide coordination of sexual assault nurse examiners.

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

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE