

2026 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 944

BY REPRESENTATIVE HILFERTY

HEALTH SERVICES: Creates the Louisiana Women's Health Consortium

1 AN ACT

2 To enact R.S. 36:259(B)(23) and R.S. 46:2526, relative to the creation of the Women's
3 Health Consortium within the Louisiana Department of Health; to provide for the
4 membership of the consortium; to provide for the functions of the consortium; to
5 provide for the organization of the consortium; to require an annual report; and to
6 provide for related matters.

7 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

8 Section 1. R.S. 36:259(B)(23) is hereby enacted to read as follows:

9 §259. Transfer of agencies and functions to Louisiana Department of Health

10 * * *

11 B. The following agencies are placed within the Louisiana Department of
12 Health and shall exercise and perform their powers, duties, functions, and
13 responsibilities as otherwise provided by law:

14 * * *

15 (23) Women's Health Consortium (R.S. 46:2526).

16 * * *

17 Section 2. R.S. 46:2526 is hereby enacted to read as follows:

18 §2526. Women's Health Consortium

19 A. There is hereby established within the Louisiana Department of Health,
20 office on women's health and community health, the Women's Health Consortium.

- 1 B. The consortium shall be comprised of the following voting members:
- 2 (1) One member who is the surgeon general or his designee.
- 3 (2) One member who is the executive director of the Louisiana State Board
4 of Medical Examiners or his designee.
- 5 (3) One member from the Pennington Biomedical Research Center
6 specializing in areas of women's health appointed by the executive director of the
7 Pennington Biomedical Research Center.
- 8 (4) One member from the Tulane School of Medicine specializing in the
9 areas of women's health appointed by the dean of the Tulane School of Medicine.
- 10 (5) One member from the Ochsner Health System specializing in the areas
11 of women's health appointed by the president of the Ochsner Health System.
- 12 (6) One member from Woman's Hospital of Baton Rouge appointed by the
13 president of Woman's Hospital of Baton Rouge.
- 14 (7) One member from the Louisiana House of Representatives appointed by
15 the speaker.
- 16 (8) One member from the Louisiana Senate by the president.
- 17 (9) One member who is the secretary of Louisiana Works or his designee.
- 18 (10) One member who is the commissioner of insurance or his designee.
- 19 (11) One member who is assistant secretary for the office of women's health
20 and community health or his designee.
- 21 (12) One member who is the executive director of the governor's office on
22 women's policy or his designee.
- 23 (13) One member who is a nurse practitioner or physician's assistant from
24 a rural community appointed by the surgeon general.
- 25 (14) One member who is an epidemiologist or health statistician appointed
26 by the surgeon general.
- 27 (15) One member who is a healthcare consumer appointed by the surgeon
28 general.

1 (16) One member who is a functional medicine provider or integrative
2 medicine provider appointed by the surgeon general.

3 C. The consortium may engage and solicit, as necessary, input,
4 recommendations, and guidance on issues pertaining to the advancement of women's
5 health from interested parties and stakeholders, including but not limited to the
6 following:

7 (1) One member from the Xavier University of Louisiana College of
8 Pharmacy appointed by the dean of the Xavier University of Louisiana College of
9 Pharmacy.

10 (2) One member from the University of Louisiana at Monroe College of
11 Pharmacy appointed by the dean of the University of Louisiana at Monroe College
12 of Pharmacy.

13 (3) One member from the Baton Rouge General Medical Center specializing
14 in women's health issues appointed by the president of Baton Rouge General.

15 (4) One member from Our Lady of the Lake Health specializing in women's
16 health appointed by the president of Our Lady of the Lake Health.

17 (5) One member from the Louisiana Association of Health Plans appointed
18 by the executive director of the Louisiana Association of Health Plans.

19 (6) One member from the Louisiana Hospital Association appointed by the
20 president or chief executive officer of the Louisiana Hospital Association.

21 (7) One member of the Louisiana section of American College of
22 Obstetricians and Gynecologists appointed by the section chair of the organization.

23 D. Each member shall serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority.

24 E.(1) The consortium shall adopt rules and regulations to provide for the
25 governance of the consortium. Such rules and regulations shall include but not be
26 limited to procedures and grounds for the removal of any consortium member.

27 (2) Procedures for filling a vacancy created by the removal, resignation, or
28 death of any consortium member shall follow those used for initial appointments.

1 F. Each consortium member shall serve without compensation except a
2 member may receive reimbursement for expenses in accordance with the guidelines
3 of the entity he represents.

4 G.(1) The member from the Pennington Biomedical Research Center shall
5 serve as the initial chairman for two years.

6 (2) After the term of the initial chairman, the consortium shall elect a
7 chairman every two years who shall serve for a term of two years.

8 (3) The consortium shall elect a vice chairman and may elect other officers
9 as deemed appropriate.

10 H. The domicile of the consortium shall be East Baton Rouge Parish, but the
11 consortium may hold meetings elsewhere in the state.

12 I. The consortium shall hold quarterly public meetings unless decided by a
13 vote of the consoritum or by order of the chairman. Special meeting shall be held
14 on call of the chairman or of a majority of the voting members of the consortium.

15 J. The number of members necessary to constitute a quorum for the
16 transaction of business shall be a majority of the voting members of the consortium.
17 A majority vote of the voting members of the consortium members constituting a
18 quorum is necessary for any action taken by the consortium.

19 K. Each department participating on the consortium shall assist as needed
20 in providing staff support for the consrtium, including but not limited to the
21 scheduling of meetings, providing public notice of scheduled meetings, and posting
22 information about the consortium and its meeting minutes online.

23 L. The functions of the consortium shall be to accomplish all of the
24 following:

25 (1) Develop initiative known as the Funding Priority Program for Women's
26 Health Initiatives to identify current funding provided for women's health initiatives,
27 prioritize funding needed to sustain and enhance current effective initiatives, and
28 identify new initiatives to support emerging scientific research and innovation, as

1 well as any additional measures that will advance women's health, including but not
2 limited to public-private partnerships and multi-state collaborations.

3 (2) Develop an Interagency Women's Health Agenda for the state. The
4 agenda shall include but not be limited to all of the following:

5 (a) Strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in research, access to care,
6 medical education, funding, policy, regulations, public education, and access to
7 information pertaining to women's health at every stage of life.

8 (b) The Funding Priority Program for Women's Health Initiatives.

9 (3) Focus on those issues of health which significantly affect women in this
10 state, including but not limited to perimenopause, menopause, and post menopause.

11 (4) Serve as a resource to the state on issues affecting women's health at
12 every stage of life.

13 (5) Identify systemic barriers and health gaps to standard access of quality
14 care across women's health and possible solutions.

15 (6) Provide recommendations on solutions and partnerships to drive
16 innovation in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of women-specific conditions
17 in this state.

18 (7) Evaluate the training in the delivery of care for medical students and
19 physicians in this state, relating to the health issues which significantly affect
20 women.

21 (8) Evaluate the impacts of health issues on the workforce.

22 (9) Ensure information data and sharing between governmental and
23 non-governmental entities relative to women's health issues.

24 (10) Identify a system for educating women on health issues to improve
25 quality of life and increase longevity.

26 (11) Coordinate an online clearinghouse of credible online evidence-based
27 information and resources, including the Interagency Women's Health Agenda, as
28 identified by the consortium.

1 (12) The consortium shall maintain confidentiality of any information data
2 or records provided to it, as required by the laws relative to such records and
3 information.

4 M. The consortium shall submit to the David R. Poynter Legislative Research
5 Library, the House and Senate committees on health and welfare, and the governor's
6 office prior to December thirty-first each year an annual written report that
7 summarizes the activities for the year prior, including the Interagency Women's
8 Health Agenda for the state, and any recommendations.

9 N. For the purposes of this Section, the following terms have the meanings
10 ascribed to them in this Subsection:

11 (1) "Consortium" means a network of public and private sector experts and
12 health professionals in this state specializing in women's health, as well as policy
13 leaders necessary to effectuate change for a comprehensive women's health agenda
14 for the state.

15 (2) "Funding Priority Program for Women's Health Initiatives" means a
16 schedule of detailed women's health initiatives in this state which are prioritized and
17 adopted by the Louisiana Women's Health Consortium each fiscal year which
18 includes any current funding provided, the entity receiving the funding, and any
19 additional funding needed in ensuing fiscal years. The schedule also includes any
20 alternative means of funding identified from potential public-private partnerships and
21 multi-state collaborations.

22 (3) "Interagency Women's Health Agenda" means a yearly assessment by the
23 consortium given to the governor, legislature, and made available to the public of
24 strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities on those issues of health which significantly
25 affect women, in particular perimenopause, menopause, and postmenopause.

26 (4) "Menopause" means twelve months since the last menstrual cycle and the
27 end of reproductive capabilities.

28 (5) "Perimenopause" means an extended transitional stage that takes place
29 prior to menopause. This state is initiated by fluctuations in hormone levels.

1 (6) "Postmenopause" means the remaining lifespan after menopause.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HB 944 Engrossed

2026 Regular Session

Hilferty

Abstract: Creates the Women's Health Consortium.

Proposed law establishes the Women's Health Consortium (consortium) within the La. Dept. of Health (LDH), office on women's health and community health.

Proposed law provides for the membership of the consortium.

Proposed law provides for interested parties and stakeholders that the consortium may consult with on matters of women's health.

Proposed law provides that the consortium may engage and solicit, as necessary, input, recommendations, and guidance on issues pertaining to the advancement of women's health from interested parties and stakeholders.

Proposed law provides that the consortium shall adopt rules and regulations to provide for the governance of the consortium.

Proposed law further provides that the rules and regulations include but not be limited to procedures and grounds for the removal of any consortium member.

Proposed law provides that each consortium member will serve without compensation, except members may receive reimbursement for expenses in accordance with the guidelines of the entity they represent.

Proposed law requires the member from the Pennington Biomedical Research Center to serve as the initial chairperson for two years.

Proposed law further requires the consortium, after the initial two-year period, to elect a new chairperson every two years.

Proposed law provides that the consortium shall elect a vice chairperson and may elect other officers, if appropriate.

Proposed law provides that the domicile of the consortium shall be in East Baton Rouge Parish; however, the consortium may hold meetings elsewhere in the state.

Proposed law requires the consortium to hold quarterly public meetings, unless otherwise voted against by the members or by order, or the chairperson.

Proposed law provides the procedure for the consortium to host special meetings.

Proposed law requires each member participating in the consortium to assist as needed in providing staff support.

Proposed law provides the functions of the consortium.

Proposed law requires the consortium to submit an annual written report that summarizes the activities of the consortium. Proposed law provides the time period for when the report shall be submitted and to whom it shall be submitted.

Proposed law establishes the "Funding Priority Program for Women's Health Initiatives" to plan and prioritize available resources to improve health outcomes.

Proposed law provides for definitions.

(Adds R.S. 36:259(B)(23) and R.S. 40:2526)

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Health and Welfare to the original bill:

1. Add members to the consortium and interested parties involved with the consortium.
2. Clarify the membership of the consortium and provide for interested parties working with the consortium.
3. Make technical corrections.