

2026 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 50

BY REPRESENTATIVES CHASSION AND MANDIE LANDRY

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, and the Louisiana Department of Health to jointly report on programs for opioid abatement and treatment in correctional facilities across the state, and to urge and request the Louisiana Opioid Abatement Task Force and the attorney general to clarify guidance regarding available funding streams for this purpose.

WHEREAS, the "opioid crisis" is largely attributed to successful marketing campaigns for prescription drugs focused on pain management, such as oxycontin; and

WHEREAS, research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates that prescription opioid sales in the United States quadrupled from 1999 to 2010; and

WHEREAS, opioid-involved overdose deaths averaged 30,000 in 2015, 50,000 in 2019, and 84,000 in 2023. The surge has since declined to 54,000 in 2024; and

WHEREAS, the legislature and governmental entities across the United States recognize that opioid addiction is an important public health issue affecting residents of all communities. Multiple federal and state laws have been enacted to combat this issue; and

WHEREAS, the data provided herein appeared in a 2025 Louisiana Legislative Auditor (LLA) report titled "Opioid Settlement Funds - Louisiana Opioid Abatement Task Force/Corporation" (Audit Control # 40240017); and

WHEREAS, over the past decade, congress has increased federal funding for evidence-based initiatives for opioid use, including medication-assisted treatment and peer recovery networks. Since fiscal year 2018, congress has provided more than \$1 billion annually through the State Opioid Response grant program administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, synthetic opioids, particularly fentanyl, surpassed heroin and prescription opioids as the leading contributors to overdose deaths in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) reported 1,083 opioid-involved deaths in 2023 and a total of 5,256 such deaths from 2019 to 2023, with the highest numbers occurring in Jefferson, St. Tammany, Lafayette, Livingston, and Orleans parishes; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Opioid Data and Surveillance Program reported that opioid poisoning death rates grew from 7.2 per 100,000 residents in 2016 to 29.99 in 2022, before declining to 23.95 in 2023, with the highest rates occurring in Washington, St. Bernard, Point Coupee, Livingston, Rapides, West Baton Rouge, and West Feliciana parishes; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Opioid Data and Surveillance System tracks new prescriptions by prescriber parish location, with a statewide average of 68 per 100 persons in 2023. That year, prescription rates were highest in Caddo, Concordia, Rapides, East Baton Rouge, Jefferson, Evangeline, Richland, and St. Landry parishes; and

WHEREAS, in 2023, emergency departments reported to the Louisiana Hospital Association that 13,937 persons were admitted for drug poisoning-related visits, not all of which involved opioids, representing a decline from 15,665 in 2021. The highest numbers occurred in Orleans, Jefferson, East Baton Rouge, and St. Tammany parishes; and

WHEREAS, law enforcement officers and emergency medical technicians are systematically the first to encounter individuals who have succumbed to opioid use disorder, particularly those accused of violating drug possession laws or committing other crimes in relation to drug misuse or addiction; and

WHEREAS, when individuals are arrested, including those who may be detoxing from opioid use and misuse, they are wholly dependent on correctional institutions to address their physical and mental health needs; and

WHEREAS, multiple state and local governments filed lawsuits against companies that manufacture, market, and distribute opioids and, in 2021, reached the first nationwide settlement commonly known as the "Opioid Settlement Funds"; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana is participating in fifteen settlements, resulting in approximately \$600 million in funding to be received from 2022 through 2038; and

WHEREAS, according to the memorandum of understanding (MOU), approved purposes for settlement funds mean evidence-based, forward-looking strategies to be used

for providing treatment for individuals affected by substance abuse disorders, support for those in recovery, and treatment for individuals not covered by Medicaid or private insurance for addictive services; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana created the Louisiana Opioid Abatement Task Force (LaOATF) as an advisory board for the opioid settlement funds; and

WHEREAS, the LLA produced a performance audit on May 7, 2025, reviewing how Louisiana oversees, distributes, and spends opioid settlement funds; and

WHEREAS, the LaOATF has, as of October 2024, distributed approximately \$98.5 million in funds. The LLA reported that relatively little of the funds (\$8.6 million, as of September 2024, amongst the survey responses) had been spent on treatment, prevention, and other strategies to address opioid abuse; and

WHEREAS, the LLA noted several key findings in the performance audit:

(1) No entity is specifically tasked with enforcing the terms of settlement agreements, such as approved uses of funds.

(2) LaOATF, in its advisory capacity over settlement funds, lacks authority under its MOU to ensure parish and sheriff expenditures comply with the MOU.

(3) LaOATF has retained \$21.1 million for administration in the Local Government Fee Fund (LGFF), as of September 2024, while dispensing \$98.5 million to parishes and sheriffs.

(4) Many parishes and sheriffs have yet to spend any of the allocated opioid settlement funds, noting barriers such as lack of clarity surrounding acceptable spending, staffing issues, and lack of programs and long-term recovery services in respective areas.

(5) Louisiana's MOU requires parishes, but not sheriffs, to submit an annual expenditure report to LaOATF; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana and Georgia are the only two states that distribute settlement funds directly to sheriffs; and

WHEREAS, LaOATF is composed of five members serving three-year terms, including a representative of LDH, the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association, the Louisiana Municipal Association, the Police Jury Association, and a person appointed by the governor who is a licensed substance abuse and mental health services provider; and

WHEREAS, LaOATF contracted with a non-government corporation, the Louisiana Opioid Abatement Administration Corporation, to receive and distribute funds; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana District Attorneys Association provides administrative support for both the task force and the corporation; and

WHEREAS, according to Johns Hopkins University, cited by LLA, "the process of deciding how to spend opioid settlement funds should be guided by data, public health leaders, and individuals with lived experience of opioid misuse"; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature of Louisiana passed House Bill No. 3 (Act No. 4, 2024 2nd E.S.) regarding pretrial drug testing and screening that provides as follows: "The expenses and costs incurred relative to the mandatory drug testing and the screening . . . shall be deemed to be an approved purpose for use of opioid funds"; and

WHEREAS, the LLA audit recommended that the LaOATF coordinate with the attorney general to ensure compliance with the national settlement agreements, to which LaOATF staff agreed; and

WHEREAS, the LLA recommended that the LaOATF consider using data and information from public health leaders and individuals with lived experience of opioid misuse to determine the best use for opioid settlement funds, to which LaOATF staff agreed; and

WHEREAS, the LLA recommended that the LaOATF ensure parishes submit timely reports, to which LaOATF agreed; and

WHEREAS, the LLA recommended that the MOU be amended to require sheriffs to report in a similar manner as parishes, to which LaOATF staff agreed; and

WHEREAS, the LLA recommended that the LaOATF should include the results achieved from the settlement fund expenditures within its annual report, to which LaOATF staff agreed.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, and the Louisiana Department of Health to jointly report on programs for opioid abatement and treatment in correctional facilities across the state, and to urge and request the Louisiana Opioid Abatement Task Force and the attorney general to clarify guidance regarding available funding streams for this purpose.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health to provide best practices for opioid treatment programs in correctional facilities, including all reasonable data, to develop a meaningful budget for such programs including but not limited to costs, delivery systems, and reasonably available federal, state, and local funding.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby further urge and request that the Louisiana Opioid Abatement Task Force and the attorney general modify the MOU to provide additional clarity and guidance that aligns with litigation settlement agreements.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby further urge and request that the Louisiana Opioid Abatement Task Force and the attorney general modify the MOU to provide reporting requirements for sheriffs to assist the LaOATF with producing accurate annual reports.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the report prescribed by this Resolution to be submitted to the legislature no later than thirty days prior to the convening of the 2027 Regular Session.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the executive director of the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association, the secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health, the Louisiana Opioid Abatement Task Force, and the attorney general.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that one print copy and one electronic copy of any report produced pursuant to this Resolution be submitted 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