

ACT No. 855

HOUSE BILL NO. 944

BY REPRESENTATIVES HILFERTY, BILLINGS, BOYD, CARRIER, CHASSION, DOMANGUE, EDMONSTON, CHANCE HENRY, LAFLEUR, LYONS, SAWYER, AND SCHLEGEL AND SENATORS BARROW, BOUDREAUX, CARTER, CONNICK, FOIL, HENRY, JACKSON-ANDREWS, MIZELL, AND PRESSLY

1 AN ACT

2 To enact R.S. 46:2527, relative to the creation of the Women's Health Consortium within the
3 Louisiana Department of Health; to provide for the membership of the consortium;
4 to provide for the functions of the consortium; to provide for the organization of the
5 consortium; to require a report; to provide for an effective date; to provide for a
6 termination date; and to provide for related matters.

7 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

8 Section 1. R.S. 46:2527 is hereby enacted to read as follows:

9 §2527. Women's Health Consortium

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

12 B. The consortium shall be comprised of the following members:

13 (1) One member who is the surgeon general or his designee.

14 (2) One member who is the executive director of the Louisiana State Board
15 of Medical Examiners or his designee.

16 (3) One member from the Pennington Biomedical Research Center
17 specializing in the areas of women's health appointed by the executive director of the
18 Pennington Biomedical Research Center.

19 (4) One member from the Tulane School of Medicine specializing in the
20 areas of women's health appointed by the dean of the Tulane School of Medicine.

1 (5) One member from the Louisiana House of Representatives appointed by
 2 the speaker.

3 (6) One member from the Louisiana Senate appointed by the president.

4 (7) One member who is the secretary of Louisiana Works or his designee.

5 (8) One member who is the commissioner of insurance or his designee.

6 (9) One member who is the assistant secretary for the office of women's
 7 health and community health or his designee.

8 (10) One member who is the executive director of the governor's office on
 9 women's policy or his designee.

10 (11) One member who is a nurse practitioner or physician assistant from a
 11 rural community appointed by the surgeon general.

12 (12) One member who is an epidemiologist or health statistician appointed
 13 by the surgeon general.

14 (13) One member who is a healthcare consumer appointed by the surgeon
 15 general.

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

18 C. The consortium may engage and solicit, as necessary, input,
 19 recommendations, and guidance on issues pertaining to the advancement of women's
 20 health from interested parties and stakeholders, including but not limited to all of the
 21 following:

22 (1) Xavier University of Louisiana College of Pharmacy.

23 (2) University of Louisiana at Monroe College of Pharmacy.

24 (3) Baton Rouge General Medical Center.

25 (4) Our Lady of the Lake Health.

26 (5) Ochsner Health System.

27 (6) Woman's Hospital of Baton Rouge.

28 (7) Louisiana Association of Health Plans.

29 (8) Louisiana Hospital Association.

1 (9) The Louisiana section of American College of Obstetricians and
 2 Gynecologists.

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

4 E. The consortium may adopt procedures and policies to provide for the
 5 governance of the consortium. Such procedures and policies shall include but not
 6 be limited to procedures and grounds for the removal of any consortium member and
 7 filling any vacancies.

8 F. Each consortium member shall serve without compensation except a
 9 member may receive reimbursement for expenses in accordance with the guidelines
 10 of the entity he represents. Any reimbursement for expenses incurred by a member
 11 shall be the sole responsibility of the entity or agency the member represents, and
 12 nothing in this Section shall be construed to require the Louisiana Department of
 13 Health to provide reimbursement for such expenses.

14 G. The chairman and vice chairman of the consortium shall be elected by a
 15 majority of the consortium members at its first meeting, which shall be called no
 16 later than September 1, 2026, and the members may elect other officers as the
 17 consortium deems appropriate.

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

20 I.(1) The consortium shall meet at such times and places as decided by a vote
 21 of the consortium or by order of the chair. Special meetings shall be held on call of
 22 the chair or of a quorum of the members of the consortium.

23 (2) A majority of the total membership shall constitute a quorum of the
 24 consortium and any official action taken by the consortium shall require an
 25 affirmative vote of the majority of the quorum present and voting.

26 J. The consortium and all meetings conducted pursuant to this Section shall
 27 comply with the provisions of the Louisiana Open Meetings Law, as provided in R.S.
 28 42:11 et seq.

1 K. Each department participating on the consortium shall provide reasonable
2 administrative assistance and staff support to the consortium, subject to the
3 availability of personnel, appropriated funding, and existing agency resources.

4 L. The functions of the consortium shall be to accomplish all of the
5 following:

6 (1) Develop an initiative known as the Funding Priority Program for
7 Women's Health Initiatives to identify current funding provided for women's health
8 initiatives, recommend funding needed to sustain and enhance current effective
9 initiatives, and identify new funding opportunities to support emerging scientific
10 research and innovation. The identification or recommendation of any public-private
11 partnership, funding opportunity, or collaborative initiative by the consortium shall
12 not authorize or obligate the Louisiana Department of Health or any participating
13 agency to enter into any contract, memorandum of understanding, or financial
14 commitment.

15 (2) Develop an Interagency Women's Health Agenda for recommendations
16 to the Louisiana Department of Health. The agenda shall include but not be limited
17 to all of the following:

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

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

22 (3) Identify health issues which significantly affect women in this state,
23 including but not limited to perimenopause, menopause, and postmenopause.

24 (4) Identify systemic barriers and health gaps to standard access of quality
25 care across women's health and possible solutions.

26 (5) Evaluate and provide recommendations on:

27 (a) Solutions and partnerships to drive innovation in the diagnosis, treatment,
28 and prevention of women-specific conditions in this state.

29 (b) Training in the delivery of care for medical students and physicians in
30 this state, relating to the health issues which significantly affect women.

1 (c) Impacts of health issues on the workforce.

2 (d) Information and data sharing between governmental and
3 non-governmental entities relative to women's health issues.

4 (e) A system for educating women on health issues to improve quality of life
5 and increase longevity.

6 (f) An online clearinghouse of credible online evidence-based information
7 and resources, including the Interagency Women's Health Agenda, as identified by
8 the consortium.

9 M. The consortium and its members shall maintain the confidentiality of all
10 information, data, and records received pursuant to this Section in accordance with
11 applicable federal and state law, including but not limited to the Health Insurance
12 Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), Medicaid confidentiality
13 requirements, and applicable state medical privacy laws. No individually
14 identifiable information shall be disclosed except as otherwise authorized by law.
15 Any data-sharing arrangement involving confidential information shall be subject to
16 written agreements approved by the applicable state agency.

17 N. The consortium shall submit to the David R. Poynter Legislative Research
18 Library, the House and Senate committees on health and welfare, and the governor's
19 office prior to the convening of the 2027 Regular Session of the Legislature a written
20 report that summarizes the activities, findings, and recommendations of the
21 consortium, including the Interagency Women's Health Agenda for the state. To the
22 extent practicable, such reporting requirements may be satisfied by incorporating
23 them into existing Louisiana Department of Health reporting mechanisms or
24 publications to minimize duplicative administrative burdens.

25 O. For the purposes of this Section, the following terms have the meanings
26 ascribed to them in this Subsection:

27 (1) "Consortium" means the Woman's Health Consortium within the
28 Louisiana Department of Health, office on women's health and community health,
29 which is an advisory group comprised of public and private sector experts and health
30 professionals in this state specializing in women's health, as well as policy leaders

1 to provide recommendations on a comprehensive women's health agenda for the
2 state.

3 (2) "Funding Priority Program for Women's Health Initiatives" means a
4 detailed information schedule of women's health initiatives in this state which are
5 recommended by the consortium which includes any current funding provided, the
6 entity receiving the funding, any additional funding needed in future fiscal years, and
7 any alternative funding sources identified through potential public-private
8 partnerships and multi-state collaborations.

9 (3) "Interagency Women's Health Agenda" means an assessment by the
10 consortium given to the governor, legislature, and made available to the public of
11 strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities on those issues of health which significantly
12 affect women, in particular perimenopause, menopause, and postmenopause.

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

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

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

18 P. The duties, functions, and responsibilities imposed pursuant to this
19 Section shall be implemented only to the extent that funding is appropriated by the
20 legislature or otherwise made available through federal funds, grants, or other
21 funding sources. Nothing in this Section shall be construed to require the expenditure
22 of funds in excess of those appropriated or otherwise available for such purposes.

23 Q. Nothing in this Section shall be construed to create an obligation for the
24 Louisiana Department of Health or any participating agency to create new positions,
25 enter into contracts, or expend additional funds absent specific legislative
26 appropriation.

27 R. Nothing in this Section shall be construed to require the Louisiana
28 Department of Health or any other state agency to implement, adopt, or enforce any
29 recommendation, policy proposal, initiative, or action of the consortium absent
30 separate legislative approval, existing statutory or regulatory authority, the

1 availability of specifically appropriated funding, and the approval of the secretary
2 of the Louisiana Department of Health and the Louisiana surgeon general.

3 S. Any recommendation, report, agenda, finding, or proposal of the
4 consortium shall not constitute official policy or guidance of the Louisiana
5 Department of Health unless separately adopted by the department in accordance
6 with applicable law.

7 T. The consortium shall serve solely in an advisory capacity and shall not
8 constitute a program, office, or operational division of the Louisiana Department of
9 Health.

10 U. The Louisiana Department of Health shall be the records custodian for the
11 consortium for purposes of compliance with applicable public records and open
12 meetings laws. The Louisiana Department of Health shall not be deemed the
13 custodian of records of any participating non-state entity.

14 Section 2. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the Governor or, if not
15 signed by the Governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without
16 signature by the Governor, as provided in Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of
17 Louisiana. If vetoed by the Governor and subsequently approved by the Legislature, this Act
18 shall become effective on the day following such approval.

19 Section 3. The provisions of this Act shall terminate on June 30, 2027, unless
20 extended by the legislature.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: _____