

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 21

BY SENATOR MIZELL AND REPRESENTATIVE WHITE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request 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.

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

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

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

WHEREAS, establishing pain as the fifth vital sign has had serious consequences, which although not necessarily intended, must be addressed at every level to prevent the

unprecedented number of Americans becoming addicted to prescription opioids, transitioning to heroin to sustain their addictions, and dying untimely and unnecessarily; and

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

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request 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 with the goal of reducing utilization of opioids to treat patient reported pain when alternative forms of pain management would be sufficient.

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the dean of the Louisiana State University School of Medicine at New Orleans, the dean of the Louisiana State University School of Medicine at Shreveport, the dean of the Tulane University School of Medicine, the executive director of the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners, the executive director of the Louisiana State Board of Dentistry, the executive director of the Louisiana State Board of Optometry Examiners, the executive director of the Louisiana State Board of Nursing, the executive director of the Louisiana Medical Society, the executive director of the Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians, the

executive director of the Louisiana Dental Association, the executive director of the Optometry Association of Louisiana, the executive director of the Louisiana State Nurses Association, and the president and chief executive officer of The Joint Commission.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES