

1 worse now than it was twenty-five years ago, with an estimated seven hundred to nine
2 hundred maternal deaths annually; and

3 WHEREAS, according to the United States Centers for Disease Control and
4 Prevention, African American women are three to four times as likely to die from
5 pregnancy-related causes as their white counterparts; and

6 WHEREAS, studies over the past twenty-five years show that education and income
7 are not key determinants in this alarming trend as an African American woman with an
8 advanced college degree is more likely to lose her baby than a white woman with less than
9 an eighth-grade education; and

10 WHEREAS, recently there has been a growing acknowledgment among researchers
11 and healthcare professionals that the debilitating effects of societal and systemic racism have
12 created a toxic physiological stress for African American women, causing health problems
13 such as hypertension and pre-eclampsia that directly lead to higher rates of infant and
14 maternal death that are more reflective of the lived experience of race in this country as
15 opposed to the genetics of race; and

16 WHEREAS, researchers have also indicated that there is a pervasive, longstanding
17 racial bias in healthcare that results in the dismissal of legitimate concerns and symptoms
18 of African American women during pregnancy which may result in misdiagnosis of
19 conditions that can be fatal to the mother and infant; and

20 WHEREAS, national attention is now being given to the undeniable inequality and
21 racial disparity in infant and maternal birth outcomes and Louisiana statistical data confirms
22 that despite access to prenatal healthcare, African American infants in Louisiana are more
23 than twice as likely to die as white infants, with more than twelve African American infant
24 deaths per one thousand live births as compared to five white infant deaths per one thousand
25 live births, the worst ranking in the United States; and

26 WHEREAS, these outcomes are utterly reprehensible and there is no time to waste
27 studying this matter further as each day represents a chilling risk of losing yet another
28 African American infant or mother in our state; and

29 WHEREAS, the current secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health, Dr.
30 Rebekah Gee, is an obstetrician/gynecologist, and a trained policy expert who has served in

1 numerous state and national policy roles, and prior to being appointed secretary, came to
2 Louisiana to serve as the director for the Birth Outcomes Initiative where she led the charge
3 to reduce unnecessary early caesarian section births; and

4 WHEREAS, Secretary Gee is the ideal expert to take a leadership role in this matter
5 and implement, through the many programs in her department, immediate and tangible
6 initiatives to protect the lives of African American infants and mothers in Louisiana.

7 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the
8 Legislature of Louisiana does hereby request the Louisiana Department of Health to take
9 immediate action to address racial disparity in maternal and child health outcomes and the
10 alarming rate of mortality for African American infants and mothers in Louisiana.

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Secretary Gee's medical and policy expertise,
12 the expertise of the many offices under her authority, including the bureaus and divisions
13 within the office of public health and Medicaid, and the countless contacts she has both
14 locally, nationally, and internationally make her department the ideal agency leader to
15 champion this effort.

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department take immediate actions within
17 its jurisdiction and control, through an organized effort of healthcare, community, and
18 religious professionals, or through regulatory action considered appropriate, to implement
19 measures to combat this crisis, including requiring healthcare professional diversity
20 sensitivity training, increasing access to home visits and doulas, and any other measure
21 considered appropriate.

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that on or before August 1, 2019, the department
23 submit a summary report to the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana
24 identifying the immediate actions being taken to address mortality outcomes for
25 African-American infants and mothers in Louisiana.

26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that on or before October 1, 2019, the department
27 host a summit on this matter to gather representatives from a vast network of expertise in
28 one setting to ensure that proper attention is given to this crisis and to chart a pathway
29 forward to save the lives of African American women and infants in Louisiana that can be
30 used as a national and worldwide model of excellence.

1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that on or before December 31, 2019, the department
2 submit a summit recommendation report to the House of Representatives of the Legislature
3 of Louisiana identifying the long-term actions being proposed by summit participants to
4 address mortality outcomes for African American infants and mothers in Louisiana.

5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the
6 secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health.

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)]

HR 294 Original

2019 Regular Session

Jimmy Harris

Requests the Louisiana Department of Health to take immediate action to address racial disparity in maternal and child health outcomes and the alarming rate of mortality for African American infants and mothers in Louisiana and submit a summary report of immediate actions on or before August 1, 2019.

Requests the department to host a summit on or before October 1, 2019, and submit a summit recommendation report of long-term actions to address mortality outcomes for African American infants and mothers in Louisiana to the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana on or before December 31, 2019.