

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 106

BY SENATOR THOMPSON

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request that the Department of Education and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education endeavor to expand and enhance oral health education in Louisiana's public schools.

WHEREAS, tooth decay is the single most common chronic childhood disease, yet fewer than half of the low-income children in Louisiana who are Medicaid-eligible actually see a dentist in any year; and

WHEREAS, numerous studies have shown systemic associations between a variety of diseases of the mouth and afflictions in other parts of the body, including connections between periodontitis (gum disease), diabetes, and strokes; and

WHEREAS, the consequences of poor oral health also include a host of conditions associated with poor nutrition, lost productivity due to pain, and even the possibility of death from untreated infections or oral cancer; and

WHEREAS, the educational objectives for public elementary and secondary school curricula established by the Department of Education known as Grade Level Expectations, or GLEs, which schools must follow in designing their curricula, do presently include an oral health education component; and

WHEREAS, the GLEs only apply at the kindergarten level, where they deal almost exclusively with brushing teeth, and at high school grade levels, but only in rather vague and insignificant terms; and

WHEREAS, the American Dental Association and Louisiana Dental Association, through their Children's Oral Health Education Initiative (COHEI), have identified a number of oral health education resources appropriate for, and beneficial to, children and have expressed a willingness to identify and develop more; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Legislature hereby recognizes that good oral health is essential to good overall health and that comprehensive oral health education, especially in children's formative years, is a vital aspect of ensuring the development of optimal habits of good oral hygiene and ongoing preventive care, including regular visits to a dentist.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request that the Department of Education and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, availing themselves as necessary of resources obtainable through the Louisiana Dental Association, endeavor to expand and enhance oral health education in Louisiana's public schools through a greater emphasis on, and more comprehensive curricular requirements for, oral health care education, with a goal of all Louisiana children possessing a fundamental working knowledge and understanding of basic oral hygiene, effective preventive strategies, and common oral diseases and their consequences before all their permanent teeth have erupted.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the state superintendent of education and the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE