

2021 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 76

BY REPRESENTATIVES EDMONDS AND TURNER

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health to post on its website notices of online opioid educational opportunities and training available in 2021 and to convene an opioid action summit by January 1, 2023.

WHEREAS, drugs known as opioids include prescription pain medications, heroin, and synthetic pharmaceuticals such as fentanyl and, for reasons relating to their chemical composition and the physiology of the human brain, are among the most highly addictive substances known to science; and

WHEREAS, the effects of opioid addiction can be devastating for families and communities; and

WHEREAS, the National Institute on Drug Abuse of the National Institutes of Health characterizes opioid abuse as a serious national crisis that affects public health as well as social and economic welfare; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that the total economic burden of prescription opioid misuse in the United States, which encompasses the costs of health care, lost productivity, addiction treatment, and criminal justice involvement, is over seventy-eight billion dollars annually; and

WHEREAS, in a national vital statistics update issued in April of 2021, the CDC reported that the number of drug overdose deaths in the United States rose at an alarming rate during the COVID-19 pandemic, with more than eighty-seven thousand Americans dying of drug overdoses from September of 2019 to September of 2020; the death toll in this period represents the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a year since the opioid epidemic began in the 1990s; and

WHEREAS, the April, 2021 CDC update indicated that among all U.S. states and the District of Columbia, Louisiana experienced the nation's second-largest annual increase in drug overdose deaths (with a fifty-four percent increase) behind only the District of Columbia (which had a sixty-one percent increase) and just ahead of Kentucky (which had a fifty percent increase); and

WHEREAS, in its annual report issued in March of 2021, Louisiana's Advisory Council on Heroin and Opioid Prevention and Education, a body created by Act No. 88 of the 2017 Regular Session and known informally as the "HOPE Council", indicates that among the most concerning opioid-related trends of the past year is the continuing rise in fatal and non-fatal opioid poisonings, with notable spikes beginning in March of 2020 and coinciding with the outbreak of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the 2021 HOPE Council annual report also notes that, as in prior years, synthetic opioids and fentanyl continued to contribute to an increasing number of deaths in Louisiana, with deaths related to fentanyl use increasing by roughly sixty-five percent from 2018 to 2019; and

WHEREAS, according to the Louisiana State Police Bureau of Investigation, the amount of illicit fentanyl seized in this state increased from forty-nine grams in 2019 to over three-and-one-half kilograms in 2020, a vast increase in percentage terms; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the vital necessity of public engagement in combating the opioid epidemic, the Louisiana Department of Health, in September of 2019, hosted a three-day-event in Slidell which the department branded as the Opioid Action Summit; and

WHEREAS, the 2019 Opioid Action Summit brought together hundreds of healthcare providers, subject matter experts, and stakeholders in the addiction treatment community, all of whom are at the forefront of fighting the opioid epidemic in our state, and was a resounding success by every measure; and

WHEREAS, considering the immense challenges that Louisiana now faces on multiple public health fronts, particularly with respect to opioids, it is critical that our state remain steadfast and focused in combating opioid abuse; and

WHEREAS, policymakers, community leaders, and concerned citizens look to the leadership of this state's health agency, the Louisiana Department of Health, to guide, support, and inspire us in combating the opioid epidemic; and

WHEREAS, the members of the legislature understand the severity of the opioid crisis in Louisiana and hereby express our intent, individually and as a body, to partner with and support the efforts of the Louisiana Department of Health to address this daunting public health crisis.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health to post on its website notices of online opioid educational opportunities and training available in 2021, and to convene an opioid action summit by January 1, 2023.

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

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE