

Regular Session, 2013

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 127

BY REPRESENTATIVE SIMON

A RESOLUTION

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

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

WHEREAS, numerous studies have shown systematic associations between diseases of the mouth and afflictions in other parts of the body, including periodontitis (gum disease), diabetes, and strokes, and also have demonstrated that the consequences of poor oral health 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 schools' curricula established by the Department of Education, known as Grade Level Expectations or GLEs, which schools must follow in designing their curricula, include an oral health education component; and

WHEREAS, oral health GLEs only apply at the kindergarten level, where they deal almost exclusively with brushing teeth, and at high school grade levels, where the presentation of information pertaining to oral health is accomplished in a rather vague manner; and

WHEREAS, the American Dental Association and the Louisiana Dental Association, through the 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 such resources; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature of Louisiana 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 preventative care, including regular visits to a dentist.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request that the Department of Education and the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, with the assistance of the Louisiana Dental Association, endeavor to expand and enhance oral health education in Louisiana public schools through a greater emphasis on, and more comprehensive curricular requirements for, oral health education so that all Louisiana children possess an understanding of basic oral hygiene, effective preventative strategies, and common oral diseases and their consequences.

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

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES