

2017 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 208

BY REPRESENTATIVE NORTON

A RESOLUTION

To create the Louisiana Bullying Awareness and Treatment Task Force to develop a comprehensive, coordinated plan to prevent bullying and address the mental health needs of youths who are victims of bullying as well as youths who are involved in bullying, and to provide the needed guidance to carry out the goals the task force recommends.

WHEREAS, the children and youths of Louisiana represent the hope and future of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative to protect and assist the children and youths of Louisiana if this state is to move forward and realize its potential in the future; and

WHEREAS, creating safe, healthy, and supportive environments with collaborative services is a necessary foundation for improving outcomes for all children; and

WHEREAS, bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength; and

WHEREAS, bullying prevention requires positive action to establish the environment and resources that will stop bullying before it starts; and

WHEREAS, bullying prevention requires a focus both on preventing youth from engaging in bullying behavior, and helping those who may be targeted; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative to intervene with youths involved in bullying to provide psychological supports and address concerns that place youths at risk for bullying or bullying victimization; and

WHEREAS, mental health professionals have important roles in helping to change the behavior of youths who bully others; and

WHEREAS, once a youth is able to recognize problems with the bullying behavior, mental health professionals can help the youth set and work toward goals for change, track progress toward new behaviors, and feel pride about those changes; and

WHEREAS, for some youths, bullying and other forms of social aggression are more related to impulsiveness and poor social skills than to an effort to control others; and

WHEREAS, for these youths, cognitive-behavioral interventions, family systems interventions, and other treatment modalities to improve impulse control and structured social skills training may also be helpful.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby create the Louisiana Bullying Awareness and Treatment Task Force to develop a comprehensive, coordinated plan to prevent bullying and address the mental health needs of youths who are victims of bullying as well as youths who are involved in bullying, and to provide the needed guidance to carry out the goals the task force recommends.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall be composed of representatives assigned from relevant state agencies, interested state medical and behavioral health services provider associations, and other relevant and interested parties, including but not limited to all of the following:

- (1) The secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health or his designee.
- (2) The secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services or his designee.
- (3) The executive director of the Louisiana chapter of the National Association of Social Workers or his designee.
- (4) The president of the Louisiana Counseling Association or his designee.
- (5) The president of the Louisiana Association for Behavioral Health or his designee.
- (6) The president of the Louisiana School Counselor Association or his designee.
- (7) The president of the Louisiana Association of Marriage and Family Therapy or his designee.

- (8) The president of the Louisiana Psychological Association or his designee.
- (9) The deputy secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, youth services, office of juvenile justice or his designee.
- (10) The president of the Louisiana Association of Child Welfare and Attendance Personnel or his designee.
- (11) The state superintendent of education or his designee.
- (12) An education practitioner who has experience addressing the issue of bullying, designated by the state superintendent of education.
- (13) Four parents or other members of the public who have demonstrated a commitment to addressing the issue of bullying, designated pursuant to the provisions of this Resolution.
- (14) Two elected members of the Louisiana House of Representatives appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (15) Two elected members of the Louisiana Senate appointed by the president of the Senate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each of the elected members of the Louisiana House of Representatives appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives and the elected members of the Louisiana Senate appointed by the president of the Senate shall designate one of the parents or other members of the public to be members of the task force.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force is assigned to the Louisiana Department of Health, with staff support to be provided from existing personnel within the department.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health, or his designee, and the state superintendent of education, or his designee, shall serve as cochairs of the task force.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall convene for its first meeting no later than October 1, 2017. At the first meeting of the task force, the members shall elect a vice chairman and other officers as they may deem appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that members of the task force shall receive no compensation for their services and shall serve at no expense to the state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the task force shall be domiciled in Baton Rouge but may hold public meetings elsewhere in the state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall meet at least once every quarter at such times and at places as it may designate. The task force may also hold additional meetings at the request of a majority of the members of the task force.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a majority of the task force shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. All official actions of the task force shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of the members.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the purpose of the task force is to make a thorough study of bullying prevention strategies to develop a Louisiana Bullying Awareness and Treatment Plan which provides, at a minimum, recommendations regarding all of the following:

- (1) Positive reforms to prevent bullying.
- (2) Counseling and other treatment services for youths who are victims of bullying as well as youths who are involved in bullying.
- (3) Best practices for establishing a safe and healthy environment for all children to learn, grow, and develop.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force may render objective, fiscally feasible recommendations to the legislature for the implementation of policies that could be adopted by the state of Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, with respect to developing bullying prevention policies and procedures, the task force shall consider solutions and strategies that will incorporate but not be limited to all of the following:

- (1) A comprehensive statewide effort to fully identify and address problem areas.
- (2) A change in the environment to effectively combat bullying behaviors.
- (3) A change in the norms for behavior from students, educators, parents, and others to successfully address the problem.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, with respect to youths who bully, the task force shall consider mental health treatment solutions which will accomplish but shall not be limited to the following:

- (1) Help the youth who bullies fully acknowledge the behavior.
- (2) Emphasize that the youth had other options, no matter what the provocation, and that the youth is fully responsible for the decision made.
- (3) Confront excuses by the youth that minimize the behavior or externalize the cause of the bullying behavior.
- (4) Support parents and educators in holding these youths fully accountable for their actions and not suggesting or allowing rationalizations.
- (5) Once the youth is able to recognize problems with the bullying behavior, help the youth set and work toward goals for change, including focusing on helping to discover the specific positive goals that the aggression is directed toward and finding other pathways to reach those goals, track progress toward new behaviors, and feel pride about those changes.
- (6) Help adults in the youth's family and environment recognize and affirm the gradual progress the youth makes toward new nonaggressive behaviors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, with respect to youths who are the victims of bullying, the task force shall consider mental health treatment solutions which will address issues including but not limited to all of the following:

- (1) Social isolation.
- (2) Decreased academic performance.
- (3) Anxiety.
- (4) Depression.
- (5) Low self-esteem or lack of self-confidence.
- (6) Suicidal thoughts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, in carrying out its purposes, the task force shall engage and solicit input, recommendations, and advice from at least one person in each of the following categories:

- (1) A child attending a middle school or junior high school located in this state as defined in R.S. 17:263.
- (2) A youth attending a high school located in this state as defined in R.S. 17:263.

- (3) An individual pursuing an undergraduate course of study at a postsecondary institution located in this state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force may provide each school district in the state with information regarding the policies adopted by the state pursuant to the recommendations of the task force. The task force may also provide each school district with guidelines for identifying youths who bully and youths who are victims of bullying.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force may develop a model form for use by schools to obtain parental consent for a youth to receive treatment services implemented pursuant to its recommendations. The form shall include at a minimum all of the following:

- (1) The youth's full name and address.
- (2) The school attended by the youth and the grade level of the youth.
- (3) The consenting parent's full name and address.
- (4) A statement granting permission from the parent for the youth to receive the treatment services along with a line for the parent to provide a signature and date.
- (5) A brief summary and explanation of the treatment services available to the youth.
- (6) A space for the parent to provide details regarding the youth's experiences with bullying and any statement the parent would like to make regarding the youth's participation in the treatment services.
- (7) Contact information for the treatment services program to allow the parent to request additional information.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each school district in the state may make the information provided by the task force regarding bullying awareness and treatment policies adopted by the state available to parents of youths who attend school in the district. Each school district may also provide access to the form developed by the task force pursuant to this Resolution to any parent who requests the form.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all personally identifiable information and any details concerning the nature of a particular child's treatment shall remain confidential.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including proposed legislation if necessary, on an annual basis to the House Committee on Health and Welfare not later than sixty days prior to the commencement of the regular legislative session.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all departments, commissions, boards, agencies, officers, and institutions of the state and all subdivisions thereof shall cooperate with the task force in carrying out its powers and purposes pursuant to this Resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Louisiana Department of Health and the Department of Children and Family Services shall assist the task force in determining the availability of funding sources to carry out the purposes of the task force.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the legislative authority for the task force shall terminate on December 31, 2019.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution shall be transmitted to the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health and the state superintendent of education.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES