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HOUSE BILL NO. 1950

Offered January 13, 2021

Prefiled January 11, 2021

A BILL to require the Department of Health and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to develop a plan for the establishment of a Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Team; report.

Patrons—Ayala, Adams, D.M., Carr, Gooditis, Keam, Kory, Levine, Mugler and Willett; Senators: Hashmi and McClellan

Referred to Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. That the Department of Health and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner shall, in cooperation with such other agencies and stakeholders as may be necessary, create a plan for the establishment of a multidisciplinary Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Team (the Team) composed of executive branch agency personnel and community stakeholders to (i) examine confidential, de-identified information regarding fetal and infant deaths in the Commonwealth to facilitate broad quantitative analyses as well as a limited number of targeted, in-depth qualitative reviews of fetal and infant deaths in the Commonwealth to identify and investigate correlating factors that influence fetal and infant mortality; (ii) develop concrete policy recommendations to address the circumstances that may negatively impact fetal and infant health and improve services, systems, and resources for women, infants, and families; and (iii) work with communities and partners to implement such policy recommendations and create actionable processes of change. Such plan shall include:

1. Methods for collecting information about fetal and infant deaths in the Commonwealth, which shall allow for the collection of information about as many fetal deaths occurring after 20 weeks' gestation and as many deaths of children under the age of 18 months as feasible, for broad statistical analysis;

2. Criteria for the selection of deaths for investigation and review;

3. Criteria for the selection of deaths for which additional investigation and qualitative review beyond that to which every death selected for review is subject. Such additional investigation and qualitative review may include interviews with members of the family of the mother of the child or fetus and other family members, reviews of circumstances and factors surrounding the fetal or infant death, and other investigative research;

4. Procedures necessary for maintaining necessary confidentiality and security with regard to reviews undertaken by the Team; and

5. A five-year plan for initiation and operation of the Team, including identification of:

a. Necessary staff, at the Department of Health and at other agencies;

b. Necessary contract staff, including epidemiologists and others;

c. Necessary equipment;

d. Cross-agency and cross-team coordination needs and a plan to meet such needs;

e. Concrete yearly goals for the Team;

f. Funding needs and a plan for meeting those needs, including review of federal, private, and other funding available to support the work of the Team; and

g. A proposed annual budget for each year.

The Department shall report its findings and provide the plan to the Chairmen of the House Committees on Appropriations and Health, Welfare and Institutions and the Senate Committees on Finance and Appropriations and Education and Health by December 1, 2021. Such report shall also be made available on the Department's website.

§ 2. The Department of Health shall convene a work group composed of the Director of the Office of Family Health, the State Registrar of Vital Records, the Commissioner of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and the Director of the Department of Criminal Justice Services as well as (i) representatives of at least four community organizations that work directly with the community on issues of infant and fetal mortality, including doulas, midwives, local nonprofit organizations, and other community stakeholders; (ii) at least four representatives of the medical community, including representatives of the Virginia Chapter of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology and other health care providers who work directly with pregnant persons; and (iii) staff and members of such other state agencies as may be appropriate, to develop the plan required pursuant to § 1.

§ 3. Upon inclusion in a general appropriation act adopted by the General Assembly of funds for such purpose, the Department of Health shall hire such contract staff as may be necessary to assist the

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58 *work group created pursuant to § 2 with development of the plan required pursuant to § 1, which shall*
59 *include a Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Team Coordinator.*