

1 SB180
2 216936-2
3 By Senators Holley and Coleman-Madison
4 RFD: Healthcare
5 First Read: 02-FEB-22

8 SYNOPSIS: This bill would establish the Maternal and
9 Infant Health Board to reduce maternal and infant
10 mortality rates and improve the health and health
11 outcomes of pregnant women, newborns, infants, and
12 mothers of newborns and infants in the Black Belt
13 region of Alabama.

14 This bill would provide for membership and
15 duties of the board.

16 This bill would provide for community health
17 clinics that include birthing centers in certain
18 counties, provide for a home visitation program to
19 provide prenatal and perinatal care to mothers and
20 infants in underserved areas, provide for
21 telehealth services, and provide for greater
22 utilization of advance practice nurses in these
23 settings.

24 This bill would also require the board to
25 award grants and tuition reimbursement to health
26 care professionals providing maternal and infant
27 health care services.

1 This bill would also provide for certain
2 immunity to health care professionals.

3
4 A BILL
5 TO BE ENTITLED
6 AN ACT

7
8 Relating to maternal and infant health care; to
9 establish the Maternal and Infant Health Board to reduce
10 maternal and infant mortality rates and improve health
11 outcomes relating to births in the Black Belt region, and
12 provide for membership and duties of the board; to provide for
13 health clinics to serve pregnant women, newborns, infants, and
14 young mothers; to require home visitations to provide prenatal
15 and perinatal care to women and infants; to provide further
16 for the scope of practice of advance practice nurses; to
17 provide for tuition reimbursement and grants for health care
18 professionals working in certain settings; and to provide for
19 immunity for health care professionals in certain
20 circumstances.

21 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

22 Section 1. (a) The Maternal and Infant Health Board
23 is established to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates
24 and improve the health and health outcomes of pregnant women,
25 newborns, infants, and mothers of newborns and infants in the
26 Black Belt region of Alabama. The board shall be comprised of
27 the following members:

1 (1) The Chief Medical Officer of the University of
2 Alabama at Birmingham Health System, or his or her designee.

3 (2) The Chief Medical Officer of the University of
4 South Alabama Health, or his or her designee.

5 (3) The Chief Medical Officer of Huntsville
6 Hospital, or his or her designee.

7 (b) The board shall meet at least four times per
8 year and hold other meetings as necessary to carry out its
9 official duties and functions. Members may participate by
10 telephone, video conference, or by similar communications
11 equipment so that all individuals participating in the meeting
12 may hear each other at the same time. Participating by such
13 means shall constitute presence in person at a meeting for all
14 purposes.

15 (c) (1) The board shall employ a director to serve at
16 the pleasure of the board. The director's salary shall be
17 fixed by the board and shall not be subject to Section 36-6-6,
18 Code of Alabama 1975. The director is the chief administrative
19 officer of the board, and all personnel employed by the board
20 shall be under the director's direct supervision. The director
21 shall be solely responsible to the board for the
22 administration and enforcement of this act and responsible for
23 the performance of all duties and functions delegated by the
24 board.

25 (2) The director shall maintain all records of the
26 board and also serve as secretary of the board. The director
27 shall prepare and keep the minutes of all meetings held by the

1 board, including a record of all business transacted and
2 decisions rendered by the board.

3 Section 2. The board shall establish a comprehensive
4 program to deliver comprehensive prenatal to perinatal
5 maternal and infant health care in order to improve maternal
6 and infant health outcomes in underserved areas of the state.
7 The board shall develop a series of interventions and policies
8 that address the significant health system factors that are
9 associated with racial, geographic, and socioeconomic
10 disparities in maternal and infant mortality rates. The
11 program shall include all of the following:

12 (1) Community health clinics for pregnant women and
13 mothers of infants in counties identified by the board as
14 underserved and in critical need of better maternal health
15 care services, specifically emphasizing the health care needs
16 in the Black Belt region. The health clinics shall include
17 birthing centers and provide comprehensive prenatal to
18 perinatal maternal and infant health care. Birthing facilities
19 in the community health clinics must be well-supported,
20 equipped, and motivated to supply sustainable, high-quality,
21 equitable, dignified, and patient-centered maternal and infant
22 care. Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, the health
23 clinics may be staffed by licensed nurses and advanced
24 practice nurses. In addition to establishing new community
25 health clinics, the board may identify and certify existing
26 health clinics to serve under the program developed by the
27 board.

1 (2) One or more mobile health clinics that have the
2 ability to provide birthing services to operate in areas where
3 maternal health care services are not readily accessible
4 through a clinic or hospital. Notwithstanding any law to the
5 contrary, mobile health clinics may be staffed by licensed
6 nurses and advanced practice nurses.

7 (3) A home visitation program that provides services
8 that provide and promote appropriate prenatal and perinatal
9 care to assure healthy births to an expectant parent or a
10 parent with a newborn or infant, and that addresses maternal
11 and child health, positive parenting practices, resource and
12 referral access, child development, and safe home
13 environments. The program shall provide face-to-face home
14 visits by nurses, social workers, and other health care and
15 early childhood professionals or trained and supervised lay
16 workers to improve maternal, infant, or child health outcomes,
17 including reducing preterm births; build healthy parent and
18 child relationships; empower families to be self-sufficient;
19 and enhance social and emotional development.

20 (4) The delivery of health care services, including
21 diagnosis, consultation, monitoring, and treatment through
22 telehealth.

23 (5) A specialized advanced practice nurse program
24 that focuses on delivery and prenatal and perinatal care. The
25 board shall work in consultation with the Board of Nursing in
26 developing a curriculum that emphasizes comprehensive,
27 holistic, individualized maternity care and alternative

1 birthing services. The program shall focus on teaching nurses
2 to consider the unique psychosocial, mental health,
3 nutritional, and educational needs of the patient and
4 formulating individualized care that supports healthy
5 lifestyle habits that benefit the whole family.

6 Section 3. (a) The board shall adopt rules, pursuant
7 to the Alabama Administrative Procedures Act, that do all of
8 the following:

9 (1) In consultation with the appropriate
10 occupational licensing board, develop standards of practice
11 and scope of practice for health care professionals that do
12 both of the following:

13 a. Permit advance practice nurses to practice
14 without the presence of a physician in community health
15 clinics.

16 b. Provide for telehealth services and define the
17 criteria for determining when telehealth services are and are
18 not appropriate.

19 (2) Develop comprehensive home visitation standards,
20 curriculum and training standards, and qualifications for
21 social workers, and other early childhood and health care
22 professionals and lay workers who provide home visitation
23 services. The standards shall require home visitations both
24 prebirth and postbirth for clients.

25 (b) The board may enter into memoranda of
26 understanding with state agencies and occupational licensing
27 boards as necessary.

1 Section 4. (a) The board shall establish a program
2 that awards tuition reimbursement or grants, or both, to
3 advance practice nurses and other health care professionals
4 who provide health care services pursuant to any of the
5 programs described in this act. The board, by rule, shall
6 establish qualifications, eligibility requirements, parameters
7 considered when making awards, and a schedule of minimum and
8 maximum awards that will be available, subject to available
9 appropriations. The board shall consider the critical needs of
10 the geographical areas served and the types of health care
11 professionals that are in highest demand when determining how
12 to incentivize professionals to work in underserved areas
13 described in this act.

14 Section 5. Nothing in this act shall modify, amend,
15 repeal, or supersede any provision of Section 6-5-333, Code of
16 Alabama 1975, the Alabama Medical Liability Act of 1987,
17 commencing with Section 6-5-540, Code of Alabama 1975, or the
18 Alabama Medical Liability Act of 1996, commencing with Section
19 6-5-548, Code of Alabama 1975, or any amendment to any of
20 these laws or any judicial interpretation of these laws.

21 Section 6. This act shall become effective on the
22 first day of the third month following its passage and
23 approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.