

MICHIGAN SENATE

Senate Resolution No. 141

Offered by Senators Santana, Geiss and McMorrow

A RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE OCTOBER 2024 AS HEALTH LITERACY MONTH

WHEREAS, Since 1999, October has been recognized as Health Literacy Month internationally. It has been recognized by 13 states and federal organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); and

WHEREAS, The American Medical Association (AMA) recognizes limited health literacy as a stronger predictor of poor health status and outcomes than age, race, education level, socioeconomic status, or employment status; and

WHEREAS, HHS adopts two definitions that, when combined, constitute health literacy:

- Personal Health Literacy: the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health related decisions and actions for themselves and others; and
- Organizational Health Literacy: the degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves; and

WHEREAS, The CDC estimates that 9 in 10 Americans have limited health literacy, and lack the skills necessary to manage their health and prevent diseases, to seek and obtain health care, and communicate effectively with their providers; and

WHEREAS, Limited health literacy affects individuals across every segment of the population, regardless of whether or not individuals possess strong literacy skills or higher education. Age, racial and ethnic, socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic disparities exist in levels of ability to access, understand, and use health information; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that the burden of unaddressed limited health literacy represents between 7 to 17 percent of all national personal health expenditures and costs the United States healthcare system \$106 to 238 billion a year; and

WHEREAS, Limited health literacy is associated with:

- 1) An increased risk of sentinel events;
- 2) Worse overall health status;
- 3) Reduced ability to understand health messages;
- 4) Limited ability to follow and adhere to medication instructions and understand labels;
- 5) Lower likelihood of seeking or receiving preventative care;
- 6) Greater use of the emergency department and increased hospitalizations;
- 7) Lower satisfaction with care;
- 8) Shorter life expectancy;

These risks are preventable when health literacy is systemically addressed; and

WHEREAS, K-12 schools within Michigan and across the U.S. do not include health literacy skills in health education curriculum; and

WHEREAS, Health literacy training for providers of any experience level is shown to improve patient health literacy and prevent patient-provider miscommunication which poses risks such as sentinel events; and

WHEREAS, Health literacy practices, such as the use of plain language, are not consistently included in curriculum within health professional's training at schools of medicine, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy, public health, and allied healthcare across Michigan; and

WHEREAS, HHS has declared health literacy as a foundational principle and overarching goal of Healthy People 2030: "Eliminate health disparities, achieve health equity, and attain health literacy to improve the health and well-being of all", and stresses the responsibility of organizations to equitably address health literacy; and

WHEREAS, Although federal organizations are bound by The Plain Writing Act of 2010 to write "clear government communication that the public can understand and use", no such law exists for organizations in Michigan. However, health organizations across Michigan are committed to promoting and supporting strong organizational health literacy; and

WHEREAS, Health literacy is necessary to achieve health equity by providing health information that is understandable, accessible, and actionable to all regardless of one's age, race, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation or creed; and

WHEREAS, Addressing health literacy needs can improve the health status and quality of life for millions of Michiganders; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, That the members of this legislative body recognize October 2024 as Health Literacy Month. We encourage efforts to increase awareness of health literacy among the general public and recognize the need for additional support and education to increase the health literacy of all citizens; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge all Michiganders to use this month as an opportunity to educate themselves about health literacy.

Adopted by the Senate, September 26, 2024.



Secretary of the Senate