

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 141

Senator Santana offered the following resolution:

1 A resolution to recognize October 2024 as Health Literacy
2 Month.

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

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

13 Whereas, HHS adopts two definitions that, when combined,

1 constitute health literacy:

- 2 • Personal Health Literacy: the degree to which individuals
3 have the ability to find, understand, and use information
4 and services to inform health related decisions and
5 actions for themselves and others; and
- 6 • Organizational Health Literacy: the degree to which
7 organizations equitably enable individuals to find,
8 understand, and use information and services to inform
9 health-related decisions and actions for themselves; and

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

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

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

24 Whereas, Limited health literacy is associated with:

- 25 1) An increased risk of sentinel events;
- 26 2) Worse overall health status;
- 27 3) Reduced ability to understand health messages;
- 28 4) Limited ability to follow and adhere to medication
29 instructions and understand labels;

- 1 5) Lower likelihood of seeking or receiving preventative care;
- 2 6) Greater use of the emergency department and increased
- 3 hospitalizations;
- 4 7) Lower satisfaction with care;
- 5 8) Shorter life expectancy;

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 organizational health literacy; and

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

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

10 Resolved by the Senate, That the members of this legislative
11 body recognize October 2024 as Health Literacy Month. We encourage
12 efforts to increase awareness of health literacy among the general
13 public and recognize the need for additional support and education
14 to increase the health literacy of all citizens; and be it further

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