**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 44‑1‑310 SO AS TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL TO ESTABLISH THE MATERNAL MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY REVIEW COMMITTEE TO REVIEW AND STUDY MATERNAL DEATHS AND TO REPORT THE FINDINGS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. The General Assembly finds that:

(1) the South Carolina rate of maternal death is higher than the United States average;

(2) maternal deaths are a serious public health concern and have a tremendous family and societal impact;

(3) maternal deaths are significantly underestimated and inadequately documented, preventing efforts to identify and reduce or eliminate the causes of death;

(4) no processes exist in this State for the confidential identification, investigation, or dissemination of findings regarding maternal deaths;

(5) the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists have determined that maternal deaths and severe maternal morbidity should be investigated through state‑based maternal morbidity and mortality reviews in order to institute the systemic changes needed to decrease maternal mortality; and

(6) there is a need to establish a program to review maternal deaths and maternal morbidity to develop strategies for the prevention of maternal deaths in South Carolina.

SECTION 2. Chapter 1, Title 44 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 44‑1‑310. (A) The Department of Health and Environmental Control shall establish a Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Review Committee to review maternal deaths and to develop strategies for the prevention of maternal deaths. The committee must be multidisciplinary and composed of members deemed appropriate by the department. The committee also may review severe maternal morbidity. The department may contract with an external organization to assist in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating maternal mortality information, organizing and convening meetings of the committee, and performing other tasks as may be incident to these activities, including providing the necessary data, information, and resources to ensure successful completion of the ongoing review required by this section.

(B) The committee shall:

(1) identify maternal death cases, as defined as a death within one year of pregnancy with a direct or indirect causation related to the pregnancy or postpartum period;

(2) review medical records and other relevant data;

(3) contact family members and other affected or involved persons to collect additional data;

(4) consult with relevant experts to evaluate the records and data;

(5) make determinations regarding the preventability of maternal deaths;

(6) develop recommendations for the prevention of maternal deaths; and

(7) disseminate findings and recommendations pursuant to subsection (F).

(C)(1) Health care providers and pharmacies licensed pursuant to Title 40 shall provide reasonable access to the committee to all relevant medical records associated with a case under review by the committee.

(2) A health care provider, health care facility, or pharmacy providing access to medical records pursuant to this subsection are not liable for civil damages or subject to criminal or disciplinary action for good faith efforts in providing the records.

(D)(1) Information, records, reports, statements, notes, memoranda, or other data collected pursuant to this section are not admissible as evidence in any action of any kind in any court or before another tribunal, board, agency, or person. The information, records, reports, statements, notes, memoranda, or other data must not be exhibited nor their contents disclosed, in whole or in part, by an officer or a representative of the department or another person, except as necessary for the purpose of furthering the review of the committee of the case to which they relate. A person participating in a review may not disclose the information obtained except in strict conformity with the review project.

(2) All information, records of interviews, written reports, statements, notes, memoranda, or other data obtained by the department, the committee, and other persons, agencies, or organizations authorized by the department pursuant to this section are confidential.

(E)(1) All proceedings and activities of the committee, opinions of members of the committee formed as a result of the proceedings and activities, and records obtained, created, or maintained pursuant to this section, including records of interviews, written reports, and statements procured by the department or another person, agency, or organization acting jointly or under contract with the department in connection with the requirements of this section, are confidential and are not subject to the provisions of Chapter 4, Title 30 relating to open meetings or public records, or subject to subpoena, discovery or introduction into evidence in any civil or criminal proceeding. However, this section must not be construed to limit or restrict the right to discover or use in any civil or criminal proceeding anything that is available from another source and entirely independent of the committee’s proceedings.

(2) Members of the committee must not be questioned in a civil or criminal proceeding regarding the information presented in or opinions formed as a result of a meeting or communication of the committee. However, this section must not be construed to prevent a member of the committee from testifying to information obtained independently of the committee or which is public information.

(F) Reports of aggregated nonindividually identifiable data for the previous calendar year must be compiled and disseminated by January thirty‑first of the following year in an effort to further study the causes and problems associated with maternal deaths. Reports must be distributed to the General Assembly, the Director of the Department of Health and Environmental Control, health care providers and facilities, key governmental agencies, and others necessary to reduce the maternal death rate.

(G) Members shall serve without compensation, and are ineligible for the usual mileage, subsistence, and per diem allowed by law for members of state boards, committees, and commissions.”

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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