**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 44‑1‑285 SO AS TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL TO COORDINATE THE STATE’S RESPONSE TO ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES AND THEIR NEGATIVE IMPACT ON HEALTH AND WELL‑BEING THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS, TRAINING, AND COLLABORATION WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE STAKEHOLDERS ON RESEARCH‑BASED AND EVIDENCE‑BASED STRATEGIES TO PREVENT ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES AND MITIGATE THEIR IMPACT.

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

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

“Section 44‑1‑285. (A) The Department of Health and Environmental Control annually shall allocate sufficient funding appropriated by the General Assembly, as well as available federal funding and private grants, to raise awareness of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) throughout the State and to implement statewide strategies to reduce the occurrence of adverse childhood experiences and mitigate their impact on the health and well‑being of every resident of this State. Specifically, in addition to any other initiatives, programs, and services, the department shall:

(1) collect, analyze, and disseminate comprehensive, relevant data and information about adverse childhood experiences, and monitor and evaluate the health and safety of South Carolina’s youth;

(2) facilitate ongoing statewide education and training to raise awareness of adverse childhood experiences and their impact on health and well‑being, targeting, among others, schools and childcare facilities, health care providers, mental health centers, and faith communities, and

(3) facilitate the creation and operation of multi‑disciplinary, public‑private stakeholder groups to investigate, catalogue, and analyze existing resources to reduce adverse childhood experiences throughout the State and to implement research‑based and evidence‑based programs and services that mitigate the impact of adverse childhood experiences and build resiliency including, but not limited to, home visiting and positive‑parenting programs; provided, the department shall prioritize funding of programs and services in communities with a higher incidence of adverse childhood experiences.

(B) The department may contract with an external organization to assist in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating of adverse childhood experiences information, providing education or training, 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 oversight required by this section.

(C) The department shall report annually to the General Assembly on the state of adverse childhood experiences in South Carolina and on existing and needed resources related to mitigating the effects of adverse childhood experiences and building resilience including, at a minimum:

(1) current, comprehensive ACE data for the State of South Carolina with analyses;

(2) existing intervention programs for children and families, including the effectiveness of the program; and

(3) any statewide or regional gaps in services for interventions on behalf of children and families.

(D) For purposes of this section, ‘adverse childhood experience’ means a traumatic event that occurs in a child’s life before the age of eighteen, which can harm a child’s brain and its development and can result in long‑term negative health and social outcomes, and includes emotional, physical, or sexual abuse; physical or emotional neglect; substance use and mental illness of someone in the household; being separated from parents, including incarceration and divorce; food insecurity; and homelessness.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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