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DELAWARE STATE SENATE
152nd GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE BILL NO. 212

AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 29 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE BUREAU OF HEALTH EQUITY.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE:

1 Section 1. Amend § 7905A, Title 29 of the Delaware Code by making deletions as shown by strike through and
2 insertions as shown by underline as follows:

3 § 7905A. ~~Office of Women's Health.~~ Bureau of Health Equity.

4 ~~Transferred to § 7905 of this title.~~

5 (a) For purposes of this section:

6 (1) "Health disparity" means a population-specific difference by disease and health outcome between 2 or
7 more groups. "Health disparity" also means a higher burden of illness, injury, disability, or mortality experienced by
8 one population group in relation to a reference group, quantified as differences in coverage, access, or quality of care.

9 (2) "Health equity" means the absence of systematic disparities in health, or in the major social determinants
10 of health, between groups with different levels of underlying social advantage or disadvantage, such as, wealth, power,
11 or prestige.

12 (3) "Social determinants of health" mean conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn,
13 work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.

14 (b) The Bureau of Health Equity (BHE) is established within the Division of Public Health (DPH), in the
15 Department of Health and Social Services and includes all of the following:

16 (1) The Office of Minority Health.

17 (2) The Office of Women's Health.

18 (c) The purpose of the BHE is to ensure that everyone in Delaware will achieve their full health potential by
19 eliminating health disparities, particularly among all racial and ethnic minority groups. The BHE works with communities
20 to address social determinants health, focusing on prevention, health, and wellness of the broader population instead of
21 treatment focused on individuals.

22 (d) The BHE shall do all of the following:

- 23 (1) Promote and provide training on cultural competency to improve access to health services for Delaware’s
24 under-served populations.
- 25 (2) Provide relevant statistical data to assess and identify health status of such populations.
- 26 (3) Increase awareness of major health problems and factors that influence health.
- 27 (4) In collaboration with other DPH programs, identify needs and expand community-based health promotion
28 and disease prevention outreach efforts, including working with communities to build capacity to meet the health needs
29 in disease prevention, education, and health promotion.
- 30 (5) Establish and strengthen networks, coalitions, and partnerships to identify and address health problems,
31 including identifying and supporting assets within Delaware’s public health system to close the gap of health
32 disparities.
- 33 (6) Collaborate with public health partners to develop and promote programs and best practices to achieve
34 health equity, including all of the following:

- 35 a. The Primary Care Reform Collaborative of the Delaware Health Care Commission.
- 36 b. The Office of Value-Based Health Care Delivery in the Department of Insurance.

37 Section 2. Amend § 7905, Title 29 of the Delaware Code by making deletions as shown by strike through and
38 insertions as shown by underline as follows and redesignating accordingly:

39 § 7905. Office of Women’s Health.

40 (a) The Office of Women’s Health is hereby established within the Division of Public Health, ~~Delaware~~ in the
41 Department of Health and Social Services.

42 (b) ~~Definitions:~~ For purposes of this section:

- 43 (1) ~~“Director,” as used in this section,~~ “Department” means the Department of Health and Social Services.
- 44 (2) “Director” means the Director of the Office of Women’s Health.
- 45 (2) ~~“Division Director,” as used in this section,~~ (3) “Division Director” means the Director of the Division of
46 Public Health.
- 47 (3) ~~“Office,” as used in this section, refers to~~ (4) “Office” means the Office of Women’s Health.
- 48 (4) ~~“Secretary,” as used in this section,~~ (5) “Secretary” means the Secretary of Health and Social Services. the
49 Department.

50 (c) The Office is established to address women’s health issues across the lifespan for the following purposes:

- 51 (4) To provide relevant research information and data conducted or compiled by ~~Delaware Health and Social~~
52 Services and/or the Department or other entities in collaboration with the Department.

- 53 (d) The structure of the Office of Women’s Health will be determined by ~~Delaware Health and Social Services,~~
54 ~~including: the Department, including all of the following:~~
- 55 (1) The Director of the ~~Office;~~ and Office.
 - 56 (2) Other employees that are deemed necessary.

SYNOPSIS

This Act codifies the Bureau of Health Equity (BHE) in the Division of Public Health, which includes the Office of Minority Health and the Office of Women’s Health. The purpose of the BHE is to ensure that everyone in Delaware will achieve their full health potential by eliminating health disparities, particularly among all racial and ethnic minority groups. The BHE works with communities to address social determinants health, focusing on prevention, health, and wellness in the broader population instead of treatment focused on individuals. Health disparities are population-specific differences by disease and health outcome between 2 or more groups, which also means there is a higher burden of illness, injury, disability, or mortality experienced by one population group in relation to a reference group, quantified as differences in coverage, access, or quality of care.

Delaware has been recognized nationally for successfully reducing some health disparities, including being the first state to virtually erase racial disparities in colorectal cancer screening and treatment, by combining individual patient assistance from nurse navigators and care coordinators with community-based outreach efforts that used trusted messengers, including leaders of faith-based communities.

However, 10 years after achieving this success with colorectal cancer screening and treatment, many health disparities remain in Delaware. Codifying the BHE ensures that this critical work continues.

This Act also makes technical corrections to § 7905 of Title 29, which contained these errors when the Office of Women’s Health was transferred from § 7905A of Title 29 in 2009.

Author: Senator Brown