

ASSEMBLY HEALTH COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 1079

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 5, 2020

The Assembly Health Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments to Assembly Bill No. 1079.

As amended, this bill requires every hospital that provides inpatient maternity services and every birthing center licensed in the State pursuant to P.L.1971, c.136 (C.26:2H-1 et seq.) to implement an evidence-based implicit bias training program for all health professionals who regularly provide perinatal treatment and care to pregnant women at the hospital or birthing center.

The training program would include, but not be limited to: identifying previous and current unconscious biases and misinformation when providing perinatal treatment and care to pregnant women; identifying personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural barriers to inclusion; information about the effects of historical and contemporary exclusion and oppression of minority communities; information about cultural identity across racial and ethnic groups; information about communicating more effectively across racial, ethnic, religious, and gender identities; information about reproductive justice; discussions on power dynamics and organizational decision-making and their effects on implicit bias, and on health inequities and racial and ethnic disparities within the field of perinatal care, and how implicit bias may contribute to pregnancy-related deaths and maternal and infant health outcomes; and corrective measures to decrease implicit bias at the interpersonal and institutional levels.

A health care professional who regularly provides perinatal treatment and care to pregnant women at a hospital or birthing center would be required to complete the training program and a refresher course, every two years. The refresher course would be designed to provide the health care professional with updated information about racial, ethnic, and cultural identity, and best practices in decreasing interpersonal and institutional implicit bias. Upon successful completion of the training program, the health care professional would receive a certification from the hospital or birthing center.

Under the bill, a hospital that implements an implicit bias training program is to ensure that the program is structured in a manner that permits physicians to be eligible to receive continuing education credits for participation in the program.

As defined in the bill, “implicit bias” means a bias in judgment or behavior that results from subtle cognitive processes, including implicit prejudice and implicit stereotypes, that often operate at a level below conscious awareness and without intentional control. “Implicit stereotypes” means the unconscious attributions of particular qualities to a member of a certain social group, influenced by experience, and based on learned associations between various qualities and social categories, including race and gender.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2020-2021 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments provide that a hospital that implements an implicit bias training program is to ensure that the program is structured in a manner that permits physicians to be eligible to receive continuing education credits for participation in the program. The amendments also provide that the training program be for health care professionals who regularly provide perinatal treatment and care to pregnant women at the hospital or birthing center.