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AB-551 Reproductive Health Emergency Preparedness Program. (2025-2026)

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AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 10, 2025

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CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 551

Introduced by Assembly Members Krell and Petrie-Norris

February 11, 2025

An act to add and repeal Chapter 6.5 (commencing with Section 127650) of Part 2 of Division 107 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to health care.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 551, as amended, Krell. Reproductive Health Emergency Preparedness Program.

Existing law establishes the Department of Health Care Access and Information to oversee and administer various health programs. The California Constitution prohibits the state from denying or interfering with an individual's reproductive freedom in their most intimate decisions. Existing law establishes the California Reproductive Health Equity Program within the department to ensure abortion and contraception services are affordable for and accessible to all patients and to provide financial support for safety net providers of these services.

This bill would, upon appropriation by the Legislature or the availability of funds from private sources, establish the Reproductive Health Emergency Preparedness Program (RHEPP) for the purpose of expanding and improving access to reproductive and sexual health care in emergency departments across California. The bill would require the department to award the grants and administer the RHEPP in collaboration with California-based organizations to serve as the technical assistance provider. The bill would require the department to establish minimum standards, funding schedules, and procedures for awarding grants and would specify the qualifications for the collaborating organizations. The bill would limit the permissible uses of grant funds under the program, as specified. The bill would repeal these provisions on January 1, 2030.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. This act shall be known, and may be cited, as the Reproductive Health Emergency Preparedness Program (RHEPP).

SEC. 2. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Abortion care is a constitutional right and an integral part of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care. In clinical settings, both pregnancy loss and abortion are managed with the same medication and procedural skills.

(b) In May 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom signed the California Proclamation on Reproductive Freedom reaffirming California's commitment to ensuring access to reproductive health care services, including abortion.

(c) With the United States Supreme Court overturning the protections under *Roe v. Wade* (1973) 410 U.S. 113, 41 states now enforce formal restrictions or bans on abortion, meaning people in nearly one-half of the states in this country, over 36,000,000 women and other people who may become pregnant, have lost access to abortion care.

(d) California is committed to building upon existing protections to the right to abortion and implementing innovative and bold programs and policies to improve access and truly be a reproductive freedom state.

(e) In many California regions, the emergency department serves as the most accessible source of medical care for pregnancy emergencies due to shortages of primary care providers, obstetrician-gynecologists (OBGYNs), and reproductive health clinics.

(f) Many emergency departments could meet the growing reproductive health needs of the populations, especially in regions with OBGYN shortages, if provided with technical assistance to expand care.

(g) The State of California should create a statewide project for the purpose of advancing reproductive and sexual health care from emergency departments, including treatment of miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy, contraception and emergency contraception, and abortion care.

SEC. 3. Chapter 6.5 (commencing with Section 127650) is added to Part 2 of Division 107 of the Health and Safety Code, to read:

CHAPTER 6.5. Reproductive Health Emergency Preparedness Program

127650. (a) The Reproductive Health Emergency Preparedness Program (RHEPP) is hereby established for the purpose of expanding and improving access to reproductive and sexual health care in emergency departments across California.

(b) The Legislature finds and declares that emergency departments in hospitals are essential access points for pregnant people and people of reproductive capacity. The RHEPP shall work to improve and expand access to sexual and reproductive health care in California's ~~participating~~ emergency departments, including abortion and evidence-based miscarriage care in emergency ~~departments~~ *departments that participate in the RHEPP*.

127651. (a) The RHEPP shall be administered by the department, in collaboration with California-based organizations, to serve as the technical assistance provider.

(b) The organizations chosen shall have experience providing technical assistance related to abortion, contraception, pregnancy emergencies, and pregnancy loss. The organizations shall oversee the recruitment and selection of participating emergency departments, administer the funding, and coordinate directly with hospitals that apply to participate in the program.

(c) Funds awarded pursuant to the RHEPP shall be awarded to increase access to timely, evidence-based treatment of pregnancy loss and miscarriage, contraception, emergency contraception, and abortion.

(d) (1) The department shall award grants on a competitive basis.

(2) The department shall establish minimum standards, funding schedules, and procedures for awarding grants that shall take into consideration efforts identified to increase access to reproductive and sexual health care in ~~participating emergency departments~~ *emergency departments participating in the RHEPP*.

127652. ~~Participating emergency~~ *Emergency* departments or outpatient clinics *participating in the RHEPP* that lack hospital service capacity and are committed to expanding access to more comprehensive care and to receiving grants pursuant to the RHEPP may use those funds for, but are not limited to, any of the following:

(a) Providing medically accurate education, clinical guidelines and algorithms, and training tools for emergency departments, including materials that correct common misinformation about abortion and other reproductive health care.

(b) Supporting clinical fellowships to support internal champions working within participating emergency departments.

(c) Providing mentorship and coaching services for physicians and nursing and administrative leadership to support practice change.

(d) Piloting the delivery of medication abortion in ~~participating emergency departments~~ *emergency departments participating in the RHEPP*.

(e) Building internal capacity among ~~participating~~ emergency department providers *participating in the RHEPP* to integrate medication abortion and manual or other aspiration techniques for the management of pregnancy loss and abortion.

(f) Developing coordinated responses between medical and nursing specialties within and outside of the ~~participating emergency department~~ *emergency department participating in the RHEPP*.

127653. (a) This chapter shall be operative upon appropriation by the Legislature or to the extent funds from private sources are made available for this purpose.

(b) This chapter shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2030, and as of that date is repealed.