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PRESS RELEASE

“Paging Senator Cauthorn”

Lawmaker Prescribes Patient Safety, Kidney Disease Testing, Midwifery & Access to Care

JEFFERSON CITY, MO – Promoting testing for kidney disease, cracking down on renegade nurses, legalizing those specializing in home birth, and creating access to health care -- not the usual agriculture issues or anti-meth legislation Sen. John Cauthorn is typically known for. This year, Cauthorn is wearing a new hat. Well, maybe scrubs are more like it.

Last week Senate committees heard two of Cauthorn's bills. The first legalizes midwifery. The second enables the state board of nursing to swiftly take action against nurses posing a clear and present danger to patient safety. Additionally, Cauthorn is working on legislation to detect kidney disease and to increase access to care in rural Missouri.

“When your constituents bring issues to you, you work on them,” said Cauthorn. “If it's important to you and good for Missouri, whatever the topic, let's get to work on it.”

SB 637 – Recognizing Midwives

Currently midwifery is illegal in the state of Missouri. Midwifery is the practice prenatal care and delivery of a baby during home births. Midwives provide more care and service during a mother's pregnancy and after birth.

A recent study by the *British Medical Journal* found “planned home birth for low risk women in North America using certified professional midwives was associated with lower rates of medical intervention but similar intrapartum and neonatal mortality to that of low risk hospital birth in the U.S.” The practice is legal in more than 40 states.

Cauthorn's legislation creates a Board of Direct Entry Midwives, charged with licensing midwives and enforcing rules governing them.

The bill says North American Registry of Midwives (NARM) must certify midwives. Practicing midwives must present written disclosure statements to each client outlining the practice of midwifery, their training and experience, liability insurance coverage, and an emergency medical plan.

Only the midwife providing care shall be liable for any negligent, willful act, or omission. Additionally, the bill removes midwifery from list of acts constituting the unlawful practice of medicine.

“Midwives are professionals providing quality care and attention throughout a pregnancy,” said Cauthorn. “Bringing a child into this world is a serious matter, and they take their craft seriously. Trained, qualified individuals safely bringing babies into this world should not be considered criminals. This legislation legalizes their craft and ensures credibility in their trade.”

SB 710 – Nurse-Patient Safety Initiative

Too many times the state Board of Nursing does not have the authority to gain and act on critical information about nurse misconduct. The board identified four barriers to patient safety – access to criminal history, mandatory reporting rules, default hearings, and injunctive authority.

Cauthorn’s bill incorporates their needs by ensuring the board finds out about detrimental behavior in a timely fashion and is allowed to act swiftly.

“In the medical community, saving time is literally saving lives,” said Cauthorn. “We must eliminate bureaucratic red tape that hinders a board charged with protecting lives. Their initiative will target renegade nurses who have long forgotten their oath to save lives.”

SB 724 – Kidney Disease Detection Program

According to the National Kidney Foundation, one in nine American adults suffers from chronic kidney disease.

Chronic kidney disease permanently damages kidneys and prevents them from carrying out necessary functions to keep the body regulated. If undetected, chronic kidney disease can lead to kidney failure, which can only be treated by lifelong dialysis or a kidney transplant. Two main health conditions, hypertension and diabetes, cause this disease.

Glomerular filtration rate (GFR) is the most accurate way to measure kidney function levels. Creatinine levels in the blood are used to calculate the GFR. Performing this calculation during routine blood work can detect kidney disease sooner. The cost is efficient compared to a urine analysis specifically to diagnose the condition.

“Early detection is always key for finding and successfully fighting health conditions. Using routine blood work to easily detect something as devastating as kidney disease is common sense,” said Cauthorn.

The American Journal of Kidney Disease reported last year that nearly half of people with advanced kidney disease are unaware of their condition. Stage four kidney disease is only one step behind kidney failure.

SB 1032 – Increasing Rural Health Care Access

Physician assistants will have more flexibility in providing care to those in need. By removing antiquated shackles more physician assistants can serve patients.

Missouri’s aging rural population places a greater burden on access to care. This burden places a greater demand for health care professionals. Cauthorn’s legislation expands where a physician’s assistant can practice.

Currently, a physician assistant must work in same office facility of the supervising physician. The assistant may make follow-up patient examinations in hospitals, nursing homes and correctional facilities.

Cauthorn’s bill says physician assistants can provide services where the supervising physician regularly practices medicine. The physician must oversee the activities of and accept responsibility for the medical services rendered by the assistant. At all times the physician must be available immediately for consultation, assistance, or intervention in person or via telecommunications. The supervising physician must be personally present for supervision for fifty percent of clinical hours in any clinic location that uses assistants.

Literature on health care outcomes shows that physician assistants work in primary care, rheumatology, post-operative care, and several other areas and have similar results as board certified physicians.

In rural Missouri, physician assistants can practice in federally-designated health shortage areas where supervising physicians are within fifty miles, as provided for in the legislation. This exception for regions such as northeast Missouri ensures quality care for patients needing it most.

“I will always advocate for greater access to health care in rural Missouri – not less,” said Cauthorn. “Giving physician assistants greater room to practice, and ensuring rural Missouri’s issues are considered is crucial to delivering the needs we are facing today.”

“Health care issues face all Missourians,” said Cauthorn. “From delivering a baby, to early detection of diseases, to ensuring greater access to care, or protecting patients, I am excited to address the needs facing my constituents.”

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