

FACT SHEET



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Unconscious (Implicit) Bias Training Licensing Criterion

Support:

HB 1105 Delegate Delores McQuinn

SB 456 Senator Mamie Locke

Problem: The Virginia Maternal Mortality Review Team reported that **provider-related factors were the most prevalent contributor to mortality** amongst all pregnancy associated deaths (51%). Factors include delay in or lack of diagnosis, treatment or follow-up and failure to refer or seek consultation. Negative attitudes of health care providers toward people of color result in assumptions about their treatment adherence and risky health behaviors, which research has shown negatively impacts communication and care in provider-patient relationships in health care settings. Unconscious (implicit) bias—such as adultification, super-humanization, and scarcity of resources—contributes to **disparities and poor health outcomes**. Black women in Virginia are dying 3-4 times more than others in pregnancy associated deaths, and Black infants are dying before their first birthday two times more than other babies. In its 2020 Scorecard on maternal health released November 2020, the March of Dimes graded Virginia a “C” on the state’s preterm birth rates, which are 54% higher for Black women among all other women.

Policy solution: Virginia must make **unconscious (implicit) bias and cultural competency training** a criterion for licensing for all health care professionals by the Virginia Board of Medicine (VBM). There is a growing recognition due to research within the medical community that unconscious bias has a significant correlation to the quality of care despite the best intentions of practitioners during the delivery of care. In 2021, six state medical boards added this criterion, bringing the national total to 13. According to the Federation of State Medical Boards, 8 more are reviewing proposals.

Costs: There are no fiscal implications. VBM provides information to its licensees on existing free and paid training opportunities to meet its current opioid Continuing Education licensing criterion enacted by the GA in 2016. This bill follows that precedent.

Who benefits: More than 30,000 professionals who are licensed by VBM and their patients will benefit. Unconscious bias training will enhance the capacity, skills, and practice of practitioners to abide their first oath to do no harm, reinforce quality patient-centered care, and raise the overall standard of care in Virginia.