**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 53‑3‑117 SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT THE MONTH OF MAY EVERY YEAR IS DECLARED “WATER SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH” IN THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA; TO PROMOTE AN UNDERSTANDING OF WATER SAFETY PRACTICES AND THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF WATER SAFETY IN AN EFFORT TO REDUCE DROWNING DEATHS AMONG CHILDREN IN THIS STATE; TO CREATE THE “WATER SAFETY AWARENESS IN SCHOOLS STUDY COMMITTEE”; TO EXAMINE THE ISSUE OF DROWNING DEATHS AMONG SCHOOL‑AGED CHILDREN IN SOUTH CAROLINA; AND TO IDENTIFY A CURRICULUM TO PROVIDE SWIMMING INSTRUCTION IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS AS A MEASURE TO HELP PREVENT CHILD DROWNING DEATHS.

Whereas, drowning ranks as one of the leading causes of death in our nation; and

Whereas, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, from 2005 to 2009, there was an average of three thousand five hundred fifty‑three unintentional drownings (nonboating related) in the United States, an average of ten deaths per day; and

Whereas, children aged five to fourteen most often drown in swimming pools and open water such as rivers, lakes, dams, and canals; and

Whereas, a swimming pool is fourteen times more likely than a motor vehicle to be involved in the death of a child aged four and under; and

Whereas, understanding the precious gift South Carolina children are to the future of this State, the General Assembly seeks to bring awareness of the importance of water safety by designating the month of May as “Water Safety Awareness Month” every year. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Chapter 3, Title 53 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 53‑3‑117. The month of May of every year is declared ‘Water Safety Awareness Month’ in South Carolina to promote an understanding of water safety practices and the critical importance of water safety in an effort to reduce drowning deaths among children in this State.”

SECTION 2. (A) There is created the “Water Safety Awareness in Schools Study Committee” to examine the issue of downing deaths among school‑aged children in South Carolina, and how swimming instruction can be introduced in our public school curricula as a preventative measure.

(B) The study committee is composed of:

(1) the Director of the Department of Natural Resources, or his designee;

(2) the State Superintendent of Education, or his designee;

(3) the Chairman of the House Education and Public Works Committee, or his designee;

(4) the Chairman of the Senate Education Committee, or his designee; and

(5) a member of the public appointed by the Governor.

(C) Members of the study committee shall serve without compensation, but are allowed the mileage, subsistence, and per diem allowed by law for members of state boards, committees, and commissions, to be paid equally from approved accounts of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

(D) The study committee shall choose its officers and must be provided with clerical, administrative, and research services by the House of Representatives and the Senate.

(E) The study committee shall make a report of its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly no later than January 1, 2017, at which time the study committee terminates.

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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