

SENATE BILL 2518

By Hensley

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4;  
Title 33; Title 53; Title 63; Title 68 and Title 71,  
relative to substance abuse.

WHEREAS, opioid overuse and addiction is a major healthcare epidemic in Tennessee;  
and

WHEREAS, over 82,000 Tennesseans are currently addicted or dependent on opioid  
medications; and

WHEREAS, in the current sequence of treatment for pain, many patients receive initial  
opioid prescriptions followed by repeated renewals until the patients reach the usage level of  
120 morphine milligram equivalents per day; and

WHEREAS, upon reaching that level of usage, patients are referred to a pain clinic or  
specialist; and

WHEREAS, treatment with further opioids continues for most patients for years, and it is  
known that addiction is unavoidable in that setting; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1.

(a) The department of health, in conjunction with the department of mental  
health and substance abuse services, shall explore the possibility of a pilot project for  
early opioid abuse treatment of selected patients who are receiving opioid therapy at  
community health centers in this state.

(b) In considering the possibility of a pilot project, the departments shall focus  
primarily on the early opioid abuse treatment of patients before those patients reach the

one hundred twenty-morphine milligram equivalent threshold to prevent their progress to the advanced level of addiction.

(c) The departments shall submit a joint written report of their findings concerning establishing a pilot project as described in this section to the chairs of the health and welfare committee of the senate, the health committee of the house of representatives, and the mental health and substance abuse subcommittee of the house of representatives and to the sponsors of this act no later than November 30, 2020.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring

it.