

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA -- 2001 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 523

Continuing the study by the Departments of Education, Health, and Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services on the services available for individuals with autism and pervasive developmental disorders.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 22, 2001
Agreed to by the Senate, February 21, 2001

WHEREAS, first described and named by Leo Kramer in 1944, the mysterious disability of autism is characterized by a peculiar emotional and intellectual detachment from other people and the common human world; and

WHEREAS, in individuals with autism, an impaired capacity for communication and human relationships and a severely restricted range of activities and interests typically become evident before the age of three; and

WHEREAS, although the symptoms vary in nature and severity, language and the capacity for a normal social life are always seriously affected; and

WHEREAS, the National Institutes of Health estimate that one out of every 250 persons has autism, and three in four individuals with autism are male; and

WHEREAS, according to the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM-IV) category of pervasive developmental disorders, autism is a spectrum disorder that includes related disorders such as pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified and Aspergers Syndrome; and

WHEREAS, recent studies have indicated that the number of children with autism or pervasive developmental disorders is growing; and

WHEREAS, in many children and adults with mild symptoms of autism, the disorder may be mistaken for personality disorders, and proper treatment may be either delayed or denied; and

WHEREAS, there is an acknowledged dearth of services and expertise in this area throughout the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the 2000 Session of the General Assembly passed House Joint Resolution No. 228 that directed certain state agencies to study the services available to children with autism and pervasive developmental problems, including the efficacy of the various treatment and educational programs; and

WHEREAS, because the study directives were so complex and broad and it was determined that the agencies had insufficient staff to adequately conduct such a study, the Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities (VIDD) was contracted to provide these services; and

WHEREAS, the VIDD anticipates the delivery of its preliminary recommendations by June 2002; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Departments of Education, Health, and Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services be requested to continue the study of the services available for individuals with autism and pervasive developmental disorders.

The Departments of Education, Health, and Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services, and the several school divisions, and the Autism Program of Virginia shall continue to provide technical assistance. The Departments may also seek the assistance of physicians, psychologists, and parents of children with high-functioning autism and pervasive development disorders, and other experts in the relevant disorders.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Departments for this study, upon request.

The Departments of Education, Health, and Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services shall complete their work in time to submit their written findings and recommendations by November 30, 2001, to the Governor and the 2002 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

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