

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA -- 2001 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 542

Directing the Virginia State Crime Commission to examine the role, responsibilities, training and authority of school security officers and school safety specialists.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 6, 2001

Agreed to by the Senate, February 21, 2001

WHEREAS, children are better able to learn in an educational environment that is "free of disruption and threat to persons or property, and supportive of individual rights"; and

WHEREAS, recognizing that safety of Virginia public school students is of paramount importance, the Commonwealth has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that safety by addressing the implementation of school safety audits, school crisis and emergency management plans, school crime lines, student discipline procedures, and student conduct policies; and

WHEREAS, in 1999 the General Assembly created the School Resource Officer Grants Program, administered by the Board of Criminal Justice Services, in consultation with the Board of Education, to provide matching grants to local law-enforcement agencies and local school boards that have established a collaborative agreement to employ uniformed school resource officers in middle and high schools within the relevant school division; and

WHEREAS, these school resource officers are certified law-enforcement officers and are to be employed "to help ensure safety, to prevent truancy and violence in schools, and to enforce school board rules and codes of student conduct" pursuant to § 9-171.1; and

WHEREAS, school security officers also play an important role in ensuring the safety of students and the integrity of the learning environment; and

WHEREAS, unlike school resource officers, school security officers are not law-enforcement officers, but are employed by the school division to supplement school safety and security efforts; and

WHEREAS, however, at least one local school board has an established school safety and security department staffed by school safety specialists who are sworn law-enforcement officers who enforce state laws, local ordinances and school board policies—including student conduct policies on school property and at school-sponsored activities—and otherwise provide security for students, school personnel and school property; and

WHEREAS, the effective coordination of school security officers, school resource officers, and school safety specialists will further enhance the safety of our public schools, thereby increasing the likelihood of maintaining an atmosphere conducive to learning for all students; and

WHEREAS, consideration of the various and distinctive roles played by school security officers, school resource officers, and school safety specialists is necessary to ensure the most efficient and fruitful coordination of school safety personnel, policies and procedures; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia State Crime Commission, pursuant to § 9-125, is empowered to "study, report and make recommendations on all areas of public safety and protection"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia State Crime Commission be directed to examine the role, responsibilities, training and authority of school security officers and school safety specialists. In conducting the study, the Virginia State Crime Commission shall consider, among other things, (i) the coordination of school security officers and school safety specialists with school resource officers; (ii) current school security officer and school safety specialist employment levels within the Commonwealth's school divisions; (iii) the role, responsibility and training needs of school security officers and school safety specialists; (iv) data regarding incidences of school crime and violence in Virginia public schools; and (v) such other issues as it deems appropriate.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Virginia State Crime Commission for this study, upon request.

The Virginia State Crime Commission shall complete its work in time to submit its 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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