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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 642

Offered January 10, 2001

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Establishing a joint subcommittee to study teacher retention initiatives.

Patrons—Amundson, Darner, Dillard, Jackson and Rhodes

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the National Education Association, citing data from the National Center for Education Statistics, has reported that teacher attrition and retirement, as well as burgeoning student enrollments, will prompt a need for about 2.4 million teachers nationwide in the next 11 years, and, should class size reduction initiatives become more widespread, the projected demand for teachers might reach 2.7 million; and

WHEREAS, similar estimates are offered by the National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices, predicting a need for 2.2 million teachers by 2009, and citing the provision of qualified teachers as "the most significant area" leaders might tackle when seeking to improve public education; and

WHEREAS, shortages are expected to be more severe in southern and western states and in urban and rural schools, with more specific shortage areas in the disciplines of science, mathematics, special education, and English as a second language; and

WHEREAS, although the number of new teacher graduates increased by 49 percent between 1983 and 1998, only about 60 percent of graduates actually enter the profession, and, of those new graduates who do enter the classroom, 30 to 50 percent leave teaching within five years; and

WHEREAS, adding to the discouraging tone of these statistics are reports that an estimated one in five teachers will leave the profession after only three years of classroom experience, and that the more academically successful college students are less likely to choose teaching and, if they have entered the profession, are more likely to exit; and

WHEREAS, to meet the challenge of attracting and retaining quality teachers, many states are exploring a variety of initiatives, including offering signing bonuses and monetary rewards for obtaining national certification; attracting students in secondary and postsecondary schools to the teaching profession; recruiting mid-career professionals in other disciplines; strengthening scholarship and loan programs; and providing loan forgiveness for service in a critical academic shortage area or particular geographic region; and

WHEREAS, in the Commonwealth, the need to attract and retain the highest quality instructional personnel has been repeatedly recognized by the legislative and executive branches, as the 1986 Governor's Commission on Excellence in Education stated that teacher compensation must be "competitive in the marketplace" and recommended the establishment of guidelines for teacher compensation and a biennial review by the Department of Personnel and Training (DPT), and the 1987 General Assembly enacted this biennial review requirement and stated that "it is a goal of the Commonwealth that its public school teachers be compensated at a rate that is competitive in order to attract and keep competent teachers"; and

WHEREAS, preliminary findings from a 1999 instructional personnel profile contracted by the Virginia Department of Education indicated science and special education as the areas experiencing the "most acute teacher shortages" in the Commonwealth, and identified shortages nearly as severe in mathematics; and

WHEREAS, these preliminary findings also demonstrated declines in the number of minority teachers and in the number of persons completing teacher preparation programs (from about 4,249 in 1996 to an estimated 3,500 in 2000); and

WHEREAS, this survey cited acceptance of a teaching position in another Virginia school division as the most common reason teachers leave their positions, followed by spouse or partner relocation; retirement; personal, family, or health reasons; acceptance of an out-of-state teaching job; acceptance of an administrative position in the same division; entrance into another profession; and, finally, pursuit of continuing education; and

WHEREAS, nearly three-fourths of the 126 reporting school divisions also indicated teacher salaries as "a factor affecting teacher demand"; and

WHEREAS, based on the preliminary data results, the Department of Education suggested, among other things, (i) enhanced teacher recruitment and retention efforts, particularly in severe shortage areas; (ii) increased support and development for beginning teachers; (iii) increased efforts to diversify the

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59 education workforce and to increase the number of male teachers; and (iv) an assessment of teacher
60 work environment conditions to better address concerns contributing to attrition; and

61 WHEREAS, in the Standards of Quality, the General Assembly has articulated the belief that "the
62 fundamental goal of the public schools . . . must be to enable each student to develop the skills that are
63 necessary for success in school and preparation for life, and . . . the quality of education is dependent
64 upon the provision of the appropriate working environment, benefits, and salaries necessary to ensure the
65 availability of high quality instructional personnel and adequate commitment of other resources"; and

66 WHEREAS, despite initiatives such as the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program, alternative
67 licensure routes, and mentorships, the recruitment and retention of instructional personnel, particularly
68 for certain disciplines, grade levels, and geographic regions, remain a primary concern if the
69 Commonwealth is to realize its commitment to this "fundamental goal"; and

70 WHEREAS, because researchers have indicated that "no one solution will resolve the anticipated teacher
71 shortage" and that providing teachers for Virginia public schools will necessitate "systemic reform and
72 intensive collaboration between state policymakers, institutions of higher education, and our public
73 schools," intensive study of effective teacher retention initiatives is necessary to further the goal of
74 providing the highest quality instructional personnel in the Commonwealth's public schools; now,
75 therefore, be it

76 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That a joint subcommittee be
77 established to study teacher retention initiatives.

78 The joint subcommittee shall consist of eight members, which shall include five members of the
79 House of Delegates, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House in accordance with the principles of
80 proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates, and three members of the
81 Senate, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections.

82 In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall consider, among other things, (i) effective
83 teacher retention initiatives in other states; (ii) ways in which conditions of employment in Virginia
84 public schools might be enhanced to promote teacher retention; (iii) the work and recommendations of
85 recent legislative and executive branch studies addressing teacher employment issues; and (iv) such other
86 issues as it deems appropriate.

87 The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$8,000.

88 The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. All agencies of the
89 Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee, upon request.

90 The joint subcommittee shall complete its work in time to submit its written findings and
91 recommendations to the Governor and the 2002 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the
92 procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative
93 documents.

94 Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint
95 Rules Committee. The Committee may withhold expenditures or delay the period for the conduct of the
96 study.