

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA -- 2001 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 683

Continuing the Special Task Force Studying Ways Faith-Based Community Service Groups May Provide Assistance to Meet Social Needs.

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

Agreed to by the Senate, February 21, 2001

WHEREAS, House Joint Resolution No. 764 (1999) established a Special Task Force to Study Ways Faith-Based Groups May Provide Assistance to Meet Social Needs; and

WHEREAS, House Joint Resolution No. 291 (2000) continued the Special Task Force; and

WHEREAS, beginning in 1996 with the adoption by Congress of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, "charitable choice" language has been added to a wide range of federal social service programs to expand opportunities for faith-based organizations to compete for government funds to provide services; and

WHEREAS, federal funds covering substance abuse treatment, welfare, Welfare to Work, and Community Services Block Grants include "charitable choice" language; and

WHEREAS, additional applications of "charitable choice" are now on the table in Congress, including fatherhood initiatives, juvenile justice, public health and literacy; and

WHEREAS, the Bush administration has declared a commitment to expanding this concept to new areas of funding, including the creation of a high-level Office of Faith-Based Initiatives; and

WHEREAS, for many ex-offenders the prison system has become a revolving door; and

WHEREAS, the rate of recidivism for ex-offenders is about 40 percent, indicating that two out of five ex-offenders return to prison; and

WHEREAS, the annual cost to house an inmate is more than \$20,000, resulting in an economic drain on public resources, and the high rate of recidivism causes immeasurable drain on families and communities; and

WHEREAS, Operation Turnaround is a volunteer partnership between the state and local faith, business, education and human resource organizations whose goal is to help ex-offenders become productive, law-abiding members of their communities; and

WHEREAS, Operation Turnaround attempts to help ex-offenders by offering a holistic approach to assistance, including life skills courses, mentoring, career counseling, and assistance in gaining employment and housing; and

WHEREAS, to reduce recidivism rates, the Commonwealth needs to examine a variety of avenues to develop programs that will provide ex-offenders with the life skills necessary to avoid crime and become productive members of the community; and

WHEREAS, the Special Task Force has made several recommendations for the expansion of the "charitable choice" provisions in state government and is actively working with the new Liaison Office within the Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources to expand opportunities for faith-based and charitable organizations to become involved in the provision of human services, and continued oversight is necessary and desirable; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Special Task Force Studying Ways Faith-Based Community Service Groups May Provide Assistance to Meet Social Needs be continued. The Special Task Force shall consist of 14 members, which shall include 8 legislative members and 6 nonlegislative members to be appointed as follows: 5 members of the House of Delegates to be appointed by the Speaker of the House in accordance with the principles of proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates; 3 members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; 5 citizen members, 3 of whom shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House and 2 of whom shall be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; and the Lieutenant Governor.

The Special Task Force shall complete its objectives pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 764 (1999) and House Joint Resolution No. 291 (2000). The Special Task Force shall also request the Secretary of Health and Human Resources to study the role in which charitable, private, faith-based and other organizations and programs may provide services to ex-offenders to reduce recidivism, including the possible expansion of Operation Turnaround and the development of other similar programs that utilize the efforts and contributions of charitable, private, faith-based and other organizations and programs to rehabilitate ex-offenders, and report his findings and recommendations to the Special Task Force for its consideration on a date as may be determined by the Task Force.

The Division of Legislative Services shall continue to provide staffing for the study.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Special Task Force, upon request.

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The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$12,500.

The Special Task Force shall complete its work in time to submit its final written findings and recommendations, which shall include the findings and recommendations of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, 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.

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