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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 329

Offered January 10, 2001

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Requesting the Departments of Social Services, Rehabilitative Services and Medical Assistance Services to study the feasibility of a data collection system to collect information about those Virginians with a disability who are unemployed in order to evaluate the feasibility of implementing the federal "Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999" on the state level.

Patron—Miller, Y.B.

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, health care is important to all Americans, but particularly so to individuals with disabilities and special health care needs who often cannot afford insurance available to them through the private market, are uninsurable by the plans available in the private sector, and are at risk of incurring high and economically devastating health care costs; and

WHEREAS, personal assistance services, such as attendants, transportation, job coaches, and other essential services, allow Americans with significant disabilities to live independently and rejoin the workforce; and

WHEREAS, coverage for many of these services, as well as for prescription drugs and durable medical equipment, enables persons with disabilities to obtain and retain employment; and

WHEREAS, for individuals with disabilities, the fear of losing health care and related services is one of the greatest barriers keeping individuals from maximizing their employment, earning potential, and independence; and

WHEREAS, Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income beneficiaries risk losing Medicare and Medicaid coverage that is linked to their cash benefits, a risk that is an equal, or greater, work disincentive than the loss of cash benefits associated with working; and

WHEREAS, despite the many opportunities for employment made possible by the Americans with Disabilities Act and innovations in technology, medical treatment, and rehabilitation, fewer than one-half of one percent of Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income beneficiaries leave the disability rolls and return to work; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the advantages to persons with disabilities that would come with the redesign in government programs that would allow these individuals to return to work, significant savings would incur to the Social Security Disability Insurance Trust Fund; and

WHEREAS, if only an additional one-half of one percent of the current Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income recipients were to cease receiving benefits as a result of employment, the savings to the Social Security Trust Funds and to the Treasury would total an estimated \$3.5 billion dollars over the working life of such individuals; and

WHEREAS, Congress enacted the "Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999" to amend the Social Security Act to, among other things, expand the availability of health care coverage for working individuals with disabilities and to provide such individuals with meaningful opportunities to work; and

WHEREAS, the purposes of the Act are to (i) provide health care and employment preparation and placement services to individuals with disabilities that will enable those individuals to reduce their dependency on cash benefit programs; (ii) encourage states to adopt the option of allowing individuals with disabilities to purchase Medicaid coverage that is necessary to enable such individuals to maintain employment; (iii) provide individuals with disabilities the option of maintaining Medicare coverage while working; and (iv) establish a return to work ticket program that will allow individuals with disabilities to seek the services necessary to obtain and retain employment and reduce their dependency; and

WHEREAS, in order to evaluate the feasibility of implementation of such a program in the Commonwealth, it is imperative that certain data about the numbers, types of disabilities, and needs of individuals with disabilities be collected; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Departments of Social Services, Rehabilitative Services and Medical Assistance Services study the feasibility of and need for a data collection system to collect information about those Virginians with a disability who are unemployed in order to evaluate the viability of implementing the federal "Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999" on the state level. The Departments, in the study, shall solicit input from stakeholders, disability advocates, business leaders, employers, and others deemed to have

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59 valuable information for the benefit of this study.

60 All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Departments of Social Services,
61 Rehabilitative Services, and Medical Assistance Services for this study, upon request.

62 The Departments shall complete their work in time to submit the findings and recommendations to
63 the Governor and the 2002 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the
64 Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.