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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 121**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE**

(Proposed by House Committee on Militia, Police and Public Safety
on February 1, 2002)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Tata)

Requesting the Department of Juvenile Justice to design and implement a uniform mental health screening instrument and interview process for juvenile offenders admitted to secure detention facilities and to make recommendations concerning the feasibility of implementing a uniform screening and interview process for pre-dispositional investigations.

WHEREAS, the Committee Studying Treatment Options for Offenders with Mental Illness or Substance Abuse Disorders (SJR 440, 2001) found that local detention homes and court service units do not conduct uniform screenings and assessments for mental illness among juvenile offenders; and

WHEREAS, consistent with § 16.1-248.2 of the Code of Virginia, the Department of Juvenile Justice regulations require that staff at each secure detention facility "ascertain the resident's need for a mental health assessment and if staff determine that a mental health assessment is needed, it shall take place within 24 hours of such determination"; and

WHEREAS, Department regulations do not provide basic guidelines for conducting screenings or assessments; and

WHEREAS, of the detention homes that responded to a questionnaire from the Committee Studying Treatment Options for Offenders with Mental Illness or Substance Abuse Disorders, less than 40 percent use a standardized mental health assessment instrument; and

WHEREAS, uniform screening and assessment methods conducted by qualified individuals can aide in identification and treatment of mental illness and help eliminate a cycle of recidivism; and

WHEREAS, the Committee Studying Treatment Options for Offenders with Mental Illness or Substance Abuse Disorders recommended that the Department of Juvenile Justice design and implement a uniform mental health screening and assessment instrument and interview process for juveniles identified by probation officers as needing a mental health screening; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Juvenile Justice be requested to design and implement a uniform mental health screening instrument and interview process for juvenile offenders admitted to secure detention facilities and to make recommendations concerning the feasibility of implementing a uniform screening and interview process for pre-dispositional investigations. The Department's recommendations shall include the fiscal and related impacts of implementing the uniform mental health screening instrument and interview process among probation officers conducting pre-dispositional investigations pursuant to § 16.1-273 of the Code of Virginia. The Department of Juvenile Justice shall report its findings and recommendations to the Committee Studying Treatment Options for Offenders with Mental Illness or Substance Abuse Disorders by September 30, 2002.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department of Juvenile Justice, upon request.

The Department of Juvenile Justice shall complete its work by November 30, 2002, and shall submit its written findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 2003 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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