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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 251

Offered January 18, 2002

Encouraging the Virginia Disability Commission to make the identification of improved housing opportunities for citizens with disabilities its top priority for the 2002-2003 interim session and to facilitate collaboration among stakeholders to develop recommendations for strengthening intergovernmental and interagency coordination of housing programs for people with disabilities.

Patrons—Bloxom, McQuigg and Van Landingham

Referred to Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions

WHEREAS, the lack of affordable and accessible housing remains a major barrier to community living and full participation in community life for many persons with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, individual efforts of the Virginia Disability Commission, the Virginia Housing Development Authority and others have identified the need for strengthened intergovernmental and interagency coordination for improved housing opportunities for persons with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Disability Commission has engaged a work group of key stakeholders including persons with disabilities and governmental and organizational representatives concerned about housing for people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, in the Virginia Disability's Commission's review of housing, numerous lost opportunities for affordable housing for persons with disabilities were documented related to the federal Section 8 Voucher programs; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Disability Commission found that on a national basis, only 10 percent of public housing authorities (PHAs) applied for the Section 8 Vouchers, specifically designed for persons with disabilities, over the last four years and that while statistics for Virginia were better (28 percent of all PHAs), they were still disappointing, given the long Section 8 waiting lists that exist for people with disabilities within the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Disability Commission has also found that accessible housing production has in no way kept pace with identified need and that the Commonwealth's housing policies could be modified to provide incentives for greater production of accessible housing; and

WHEREAS, national housing consultation has provided the Virginia Disability Commission with action recommendations to improve access and use of Section 8 Vouchers and other federal opportunities specifically designed for persons with disabilities and the production of accessible housing stock; and

WHEREAS, housing assistance agencies have also reported a marked communication gap between state/local housing authorities and the disability community; and

WHEREAS, these findings were also documented in the 1999 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission study on housing; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia Disability Commission be encouraged to make the identification of improved housing opportunities for citizens with disabilities its top priority for the 2002-2003 interim session and to facilitate collaboration among stakeholders to develop recommendations for strengthening intergovernmental and interagency coordination of housing programs for people with disabilities; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Virginia Disability Commission's work group be expanded to include the participation and involvement of all federal, state, local and community agencies, organizations and individuals concerned about housing for people with disabilities; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Virginia Disability Commission and its work group be encouraged to develop a Housing Action Plan that (i) identifies the mission, composition, responsibilities, and funding for an intergovernmental, interagency coordinating body on housing and disability issues, (ii) identifies actionable strategies for the maximizing use of Section 8 programs and other federal housing and housing production programs for individuals with disabilities in Virginia, and (iii) develops a system of incentives and rewards for building accessible housing; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Virginia Disability Commission and work group make use of existing research and presentation opportunities, including the annual state housing conference, to bring about optimal statewide attention to the housing needs of people with disabilities and available federal opportunities.

INTRODUCED

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