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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 32

Offered January 9, 2002

Prefiled December 20, 2001

Establishing a joint subcommittee to study grandparents raising children.

Patron—Miller, Y.B.

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, over 1.4 million children in the United States are being raised by grandparents, without a parent in the home; and

WHEREAS, in most cases, children have come to the grandparents due to serious parental problems such as substance abuse, imprisonment, AIDS or other serious illnesses, abuse or other inability to care for the child, and death; and

WHEREAS, in addition to other daunting problems facing grandparents who are suddenly faced with raising young children, the financial burden alone is the most formidable; and

WHEREAS, census data shows that grandparents raising children are 60 percent more likely to be living in poverty than grandparents not raising children, and 27 percent of children in households headed by a grandparent are living in poverty; and

WHEREAS, other practical problems can be stressful for the grandparent, including the sudden arrival of the child with no time to prepare, inadequate housing, obstacles to enrolling the child in school or obtaining health care because the grandparent does not yet have legal custody and the costs involved in accessing the legal system to obtain legal custody; and

WHEREAS, the child may have continuing problems that go beyond the change in custody, namely health problems from prenatal and continuing substance abuse and continued disruption by the parent; and

WHEREAS, grandparents experience severe stress on their own marriages and financial security, as well as health and mobility challenges; and

WHEREAS, many grandparents need assistance to help raise their grandchildren, but there currently is no nationwide program available to help these individuals because most programs are designed explicitly to help other types of persons; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study the needs of grandparents raising grandchildren. The joint subcommittee shall be composed of nine members as follows: five members of the Senate, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; and three 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.

In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall study, but not be limited to, the scope of the issue in the Commonwealth: support systems available to other persons raising children, including housing, TANF, respite care, payments at the same rate as foster care, and comparable support services for health and public school admission.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$11,250.

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

The joint subcommittee shall complete its work by November 30, 2002 and 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.

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.

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