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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 75

Offered January 9, 2002

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Establishing a joint subcommittee to study the recruitment and retention of classroom teachers.

Patrons—Ruff and Hawkins; Delegates: Abbitt, Armstrong, Byron, Councill, Hogan, Hurt, Janis, Kilgore, Landes, Marshall, D.W., Stump and Wright

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Article VIII, Section 1 of the Virginia Constitution requires that the Commonwealth provide for a "system of free public elementary and secondary schools for all children of school age throughout the Commonwealth, and shall seek to ensure that an educational program of high quality is established and continually maintained"; and

WHEREAS, essential to meeting the constitutional responsibilities for the education of Virginia's children, the Commonwealth declares in Standard 1 of the Standards of Quality,

(§ 22.1-253.13:1) that "the quality of education is dependent upon the provision of the appropriate working environment, benefits, and salaries necessary to ensure the availability of high quality instructional personnel"; and

WHEREAS, teachers are the agents by which the diffusion of knowledge throughout society is achieved to inform, equip, and sustain the present generation and the conduits through which civilization and the ethos of a nation are transmitted and perpetuated for the common good of our progeny; and

WHEREAS, teachers encourage intellectual curiosity and inquiry, nurture innate gifts and creativity, acquaint students with new ways of viewing ordinary things, and challenge students to think, imagine, and dream of possibilities beyond their horizons; and

WHEREAS, the transference of our heritage and the ability to stimulate an appreciation of learning and to provide for an educated citizenry is threatened by a severe shortage of classroom teachers; and

WHEREAS, the demand for teachers is most urgent in the disciplines of science, mathematics, special education, foreign language, and technological studies, among males at the elementary and middle school levels, and among minority teachers in all disciplines and grade levels; and

WHEREAS, according to the United States Department of Education, nearly three million more children in America will need to be educated by 2006, and during the next 10 years, two million teachers will need to be hired to meet the projected increase in enrollments; and

WHEREAS, the President and the Governor of Virginia have announced goals to increase significantly the number of teachers in the classrooms of the nation and of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, sister states struggling to respond to this problem have resorted to recalling retired teachers, hiring substitutes, developing alternative paths to the teaching career, teacher induction and professional development programs for teachers, and providing generous financial and other enticing incentives to attract and retain classroom teachers; and

WHEREAS, according to recent studies concerning the need for teachers, "urban schools find it difficult to recruit qualified teachers regardless of background, and nearly a quarter of central city schools have vacancies they cannot fill with a qualified teacher; schools with high minority enrollments have the greatest difficulty finding qualified teachers; and students in inner city, high-minority schools have only a 50 percent chance of being taught by a qualified science or math teacher"; and

WHEREAS, rural and small school divisions experience problems recruiting and retaining qualified teachers in all subject areas, particularly mathematics, science, and special education, and specific strategies are needed to address the problem and enable these divisions to compete successfully with larger school divisions; and

WHEREAS, research suggests that the ideal rural teacher is endorsed to teach more than one subject or grade level, can teach students with a wide range of abilities in the same classroom, is prepared to supervise extracurricular activities, and can adjust to the community; and

WHEREAS, the demand for classroom teachers can be attributed to many factors, including retirement, low salaries, poor working conditions, school safety issues, lack of administrative support, diminished status of and respect for the teaching profession, increasing demands on the profession with very few rewards, and many options to pursue more respected, lucrative, and psychologically fulfilling careers; and

WHEREAS, in rural and small school divisions, geographic isolation, weather, distance from larger communities and family, professional reasons, and fewer social, cultural, and economic opportunities contribute to the difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers who can assimilate into the

58 school and community and who will continue to teach in the area; and

59 WHEREAS, providing for qualified, competent, and gifted classroom teachers is a shared
60 responsibility between the Board of Education and Virginia's institutions of higher education; and

61 WHEREAS, the ultimate responsibility for public education rests with the Virginia General
62 Assembly, which is specifically charged with the duties of establishing a public school system and
63 striving to ensure its quality; and

64 WHEREAS, assisting students and schools in Virginia to meet the new Standards of Learning and
65 Standards of Accreditation requires a corps of skilled, compassionate, qualified, well-compensated
66 teachers, a school environment conducive to learning, administrative support, and respect for the
67 teaching profession, factors critical to the success of education reform in the Commonwealth; now,
68 therefore, be it

69 RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That a joint subcommittee be
70 established to study the recruitment and retention of classroom teachers. The joint subcommittee shall be
71 composed of 10 legislative members as follows: six members of the Senate, to be appointed by the
72 Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; and four members of the House of Delegates, to be
73 appointed by the Speaker of the House, in accordance with the principles of proportional representation
74 contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates.

75 In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall project the number of classroom teachers needed
76 in Virginia over the next 10 years by region and discipline; review the teacher education process and
77 assess the need for change; evaluate the ability and progress of alternative teacher licensure paths to
78 supply additional qualified teachers; identify the instructional staffing needs of rural and small school
79 divisions and recommend appropriate strategies to address the shortage of teachers in these areas; assess
80 recruitment and retention efforts among school divisions, particularly in rural and urban underserved
81 areas; evaluate procedures for awarding continuing contracts, including how Virginia may retain the
82 most capable teachers and replace teachers who do not meet the qualifications, standards, and
83 expectations set for teachers; address the issues associated with compensation of teachers; determine the
84 adequacy of pre-service and in-service professional development of teachers; review and assess the
85 recruitment and retention efforts of adjoining states for possible adaptation in Virginia; and, recommend
86 ways to attract and retain an adequate supply of qualified teachers in Virginia.

87 Further, the joint subcommittee shall communicate and collaborate with other study committees
88 charged to examine certain aspects of teacher education, recruitment and retention, and other related
89 issues to avoid unnecessary duplication and fragmentation.

90 The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$12,000.

91 The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. Technical assistance
92 shall be provided by the Department of Education, the State Council of Higher Education, and the staffs
93 of the Senate Committee on Finance and the House Committee on Appropriations.

94 All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee, upon request.

95 The joint subcommittee shall complete its work by November 30, 2002, and shall submit its written
96 findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 2003 Session of the General Assembly as
97 provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of
98 legislative documents.

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