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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 135

Offered January 14, 2004

Prefiled January 13, 2004

Directing the Joint Commission on Health Care to study access to and the availability of geriatricians and ways to increase geriatrics expertise among Virginia's health professionals. Report.

Patron—Morgan

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, with the aging of America has come the need to contain health care costs among senior citizens by developing and implementing wellness programs and preventive care; and

WHEREAS, because older individuals often do not respond to therapies in the same manner as young individuals and often do not display the same or identical symptoms of medical conditions as young individuals, they frequently do not receive the most efficient care; and

WHEREAS, therefore, as the older population increases in the United States, the need to increase the prevalence of geriatrics expertise among all members of the health care community becomes more apparent and important; and

WHEREAS, however, medical education is already bulging with training curriculum and an enormous information explosion; and

WHEREAS, in Virginia, there is a need for a clear understanding of how many geriatricians are available to treat the ever increasing older population and where these experts are located or practicing in Virginia to identify potential needs and to plan for the future; and

WHEREAS, because the need for geriatricians in all fields of study will become more and more crucial as the senior citizen population increases, Virginia must identify its programs, the components of the medical and health care curricula that relate to developing geriatrics expertise, and ways to incorporate additional training on geriatrics into the curriculum of various health care professions in an efficient and effective way; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Commission on Health Care be directed to study access to and the availability of geriatricians and ways to increase geriatrics expertise among Virginia's health professionals.

In conducting its study, the Joint Commission on Health Care shall survey the Commonwealth's three medical schools and other health professional programs in Virginia's private and public institutions of higher education to ascertain how geriatrics is covered in the curricula and what, if any, plans have been or are being made to develop specific programs focused on geriatrics or incorporating appropriate principles into the present programs for surgeons, psychiatrists, neurologists, dentists, other specialty areas, and primary care specialties. The Joint Commission shall also ascertain how the known effects of aging on the immune system, the nervous system and other organ systems are approached or included in the relevant courses of various undergraduate courses for health care professionals or basic science classes for graduate and professional students. In its deliberations, the Joint Commission shall determine the adequacy of the Commonwealth's programs and whether additional projects, programs, or curriculum should be initiated in order to produce an adequate supply of geriatricians to care for Virginia's senior citizens. Upon completion of its data collection and analyses, the Joint Commission shall make recommendations concerning (i) the professionals that should be encouraged to study geriatrics, (ii) additions to any medical school or higher education curriculum, (iii) the number of geriatricians in various health professions and specialties that will be needed in Virginia by 2010, and (iv) initiatives for individuals enrolled in various medical and health care education to become geriatricians.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Joint Commission on Health Care by the Department of Health, the Department of Health Professions, and the public institutions of higher education, including, but not limited to, the three medical schools. All other agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Commission for this study, upon request.

The Joint Commission on Health Care shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2004, and the executive director shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the 2005 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether the Joint Commission intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations (for publication as a document). The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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