

040933840

## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 131

Offered January 26, 2004

*Requesting the Department of Health to study the statewide response to sexual assault victims and the prevention of sexual assault. Report.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patron—Watkins

\_\_\_\_\_  
Unanimous consent to introduce

\_\_\_\_\_  
Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Health confirms that sexual assault is a major public health problem in the Commonwealth and a 2003 survey conducted by the Center for Advancement of Women shows that sexual assault and domestic violence are women's top concern; and

WHEREAS, in 1999 Virginia law enforcement switched to incident-based reporting and began counting all sexual assaults, resulting in more accurate counting of sexual assault crimes and revealing a steady increase in reported sexual assaults since 1999, and 37 sexual assault crisis centers in Virginia provided services to 9,617 new victims of sexual assault in 2002; and

WHEREAS, according to a recent survey by the Virginia Department of Health, 78.1 percent of sexual assault incidents involving female victims and 94.4 percent of sexual assault incidents involving male victims occurred when the victims were under 18 years of age; and

WHEREAS, national studies have found that females being treated for sexual assault in emergency departments are not being provided the full range of treatment recommended by the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Medical Association's Standards for Emergency Care; and

WHEREAS, there have been no recent efforts to collect comprehensive statewide data on the response to and prevention of sexual assault; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Department of Health be requested to study the statewide response to sexual assault victims and the prevention of sexual assault by law enforcement, sexual assault crisis centers and other advocacy and support services, medical personnel, and the judicial system and to design a plan to provide the General Assembly with recommendations for improvements.

In conducting its study, the Department of Health shall (i) review law enforcement and criminal justice statistics and interactions with victims, identify inconsistencies and determine causes; (ii) determine treatment and services provided to victims by medical personnel throughout the Commonwealth; (iii) examine sexual assault crisis center delivery in each locality to determine availability, accessibility and comprehensiveness; (iv) determine prevention efforts in communities and across the Commonwealth and how such efforts can be enhanced; and (v) survey collaborative efforts between all agencies and organizations that work with victims of sexual assault.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Department of Health by the Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department of Health for this study, upon request.

The Department of Health shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2004, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and 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 no later than the first day of the 2005 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

INTRODUCED

SJ131