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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 132

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Establishing a joint subcommittee to study food insecurity in the Commonwealth. Report.

Patrons—Englin, Alexander, Armstrong, BaCote, Dance, Eisenberg, Howell, A.T., Jones, D.C., McClellan, McEachin, Melvin, Moran, Phillips, Scott, J.M., Shannon, Shuler, Spruill, Toscano, Tyler and Ware, O.

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, despite obvious wealth and numerous federal, state, and private sector food assistance programs to assist low-income and impoverished people, a disturbing aspect of life in the United States is the persistence of hunger; and

WHEREAS, while starvation seldom occurs in the nation, hunger and chronic undernutrition are prevalent and serious problems among children and adults; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service estimates that "eighty-eight percent of American households were food secure throughout the entire year 2004, having access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members"; and

WHEREAS, however, the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service reported that "in 2004, 13.5 million households or 11.9 percent of all U.S. households were food insecure, with limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways"; and

WHEREAS, a national survey of households by the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service indicates that "food-secure households spent 31 percent more on food than food-insecure households of the same size and composition, and that approximately 20 percent of food-insecure households, or 3.5 percent of all U.S. households, obtained emergency food from a food pantry at some time during 2004"; and

WHEREAS, the national survey also revealed that 4.4 million households experienced hunger and 13.9 million children under age 18 lived in food insecure households in 2004; and

WHEREAS, hunger is a condition of poverty, and food insecurity and hunger are concentrated in low-income households; and

WHEREAS, in 2004, food insecurity was more than three times the national level among households with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty line; and

WHEREAS, hunger can have harmful effects on cognition, growth, learning, productivity, physical and psychological health, and family life, and is linked to obesity due to the consumption of high caloric foods and a less healthy diet to stave off hunger; and

WHEREAS, according to the 2001 America's Second Harvest hunger survey, the Federation of Virginia Food Banks feeds more than 320,000 individuals each week and more than 1.4 million people through food distributions around the Commonwealth each year ; and

WHEREAS, during the 2003 fiscal year, food banks in the Commonwealth distributed 45.6 million pounds of food; and

WHEREAS, adequate food is a basic human need and the persistence of food insecurity and hunger is a pressing social issue with economic and public health implications that must be addressed; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study food insecurity in the Commonwealth. The joint subcommittee shall have a total membership of eight members that shall consist of five members of the House of Delegates to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates in accordance with the principles of proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates; and three members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules. The joint subcommittee shall elect a chairman and vice chairman from among its membership, who shall be members of the General Assembly.

In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall (i) determine the rate of food insecurity in the Commonwealth, demographically and geographically; (ii) evaluate the ability of public and private sector food assistance programs to assist food-insecure households; (iii) identify the social, economic, and health effects of hunger within the Commonwealth, including, but not limited to, poverty, undernutrition and malnutrition rates, related physical, psychological, and mental health conditions, morbidity and mortality rates, workplace productivity, academic performance and school attendance of students in grades pre-kindergarten through 12 and college, family stability, and crime; (iv) recommend feasible and

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57 appropriate alternatives to reduce food insecurity in the Commonwealth; and (v) consider such other
58 related matters as the joint subcommittee may deem appropriate.

59 Administrative staff support shall be provided by the Office of the Clerk of the House of Delegates.
60 Legal, research, policy analysis, and other services as requested by the joint subcommittee shall be
61 provided by the Division of Legislative Services. Technical assistance shall be provided by the
62 Departments of Health, Education, Social Services, and Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.
63 All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee for this study,
64 upon request.

65 The joint subcommittee shall be limited to four meetings for the 2006 interim and four meetings for
66 the 2007 interim, and the direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$8,000 for each year without
67 approval as set out in this resolution. Approval for unbudgeted nonmember-related expenses shall require
68 the written authorization of the chairman of the joint subcommittee and the respective Clerk. If a
69 companion joint resolution of the other chamber is agreed to, written authorization of both Clerks shall
70 be required.

71 No recommendation of the joint subcommittee shall be adopted if a majority of the House members
72 or a majority of the Senate members appointed to the joint subcommittee (i) vote against the
73 recommendation and (ii) vote for the recommendation to fail notwithstanding the majority vote of the
74 joint subcommittee.

75 The joint subcommittee shall complete its meetings for the first year by November 30, 2006, and for
76 the second year by November 30, 2007, and the chairman shall submit to the Division of Legislative
77 Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first
78 day of the next Regular Session of the General Assembly for each year. Each executive summary shall
79 state whether the joint subcommittee intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a
80 report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The
81 executive summaries and reports shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of
82 Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be
83 posted on the General Assembly's website.

84 Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint
85 Rules Committee. The Committee may approve or disapprove expenditures for this study, extend or
86 delay the period for the conduct of the study, or authorize additional meetings during the 2006 and 2007
87 interim.