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## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 158

Offered January 11, 2006

*Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study the components, development, and implementation of universal health care coverage for Virginians. Report.*

Patrons—O'Bannon and Ebbin

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the National Coalition on Health Care (NCHC) has stated that "employer health insurance premiums increased by 11.2 percent—nearly four times the rate of inflation" in 2004; and

WHEREAS, the NCHC also notes that "[a]lthough nearly 45 million Americans are uninsured, the United States spends more on health care than other industrialized nations, and those countries provide health insurance to all their citizens"; and

WHEREAS, with the aging of the baby boomers, health care costs could become staggering; and

WHEREAS, family finances can be drastically or even catastrophically affected if one uninsured member suffers accidental injury or serious illness or the family loses its health insurance coverage; and

WHEREAS, it has been estimated that 50 percent or more of bankruptcies are related to costs associated with health care; and

WHEREAS, various states have attempted to craft programs to increase health care coverage for their citizens; however, such plans can be overwhelmed by the rising costs of health care; for example, TennCare has recently announced drastic cuts in eligibility and benefits; and

WHEREAS, currently, in other states, various groups or public/private partnerships are engaged in developing alternatives to provide greater health insurance coverage for their citizens; for example, MaineHealth, a nonprofit system, has initiated a project to improve the health of Maine's citizens; DIRIGO Health is aimed at providing health insurance coverage for Maine's uninsured population by 2009; and Maine RxPlus is designed to offer uninsured Mainers various discounts on prescription drugs; and

WHEREAS, the goal of making health care insurance available to most, if not all, of Virginia's citizens may be attainable; however, any project to attain this goal would have to be designed carefully to include requirements for personal responsibility, after comprehensive and detailed examination of the issues and the benefits and drawbacks of various approaches; and

WHEREAS, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies released a report in 2004 that noted the devastating consequences of going uninsured in terms of adverse health results, early deaths, and burdensome uncompensated care; and

WHEREAS, the 2004 IOM report called for setting "a target date of 2010 for achieving universal coverage to allow for the development, adoption, and implementation of a comprehensive coverage strategy"; and

WHEREAS, the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) has developed many health benefits packages for small-business owners and their employees and supports the concepts included in the 2005 Congressional bill, "The Small Business Health Fairness Act," which would have allowed small businesses and their employees to join forces across state lines to purchase health benefits; and

WHEREAS, in Virginia, the costs of health care are increasing at an unsustainable rate while the population of senior citizens is burgeoning and the number of uninsured grows ever larger; thus, it is imperative that solutions to this looming health care crisis be developed with all due haste; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission be directed to study the components, development, and implementation of universal health care coverage for Virginians.

In conducting its study, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall:

1. Analyze Virginia's present health care systems to identify inefficiencies, excessive administrative expenses, inflated prices, poor management, inappropriate care, waste and fraud, and any other management or regulatory problems that may significantly increase the cost of health care for Virginians;

2. Seek input from employers concerning appropriate means for increasing health insurance coverage among uninsured workers and others in Virginia;

3. Examine various mechanisms that have been implemented in other states and other countries to provide universal health insurance to determine which mechanisms are successful and cost effective;

4. Consider federal proposals for containing costs in Medicaid, Medicare, and for employers' health

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59 insurance and evaluate any federal barriers to implementation of cost effective and adequate universal  
60 coverage;

61 5. Consider proposals that have been or are made by various national organizations, including, but  
62 not limited to, the Institute of Medicine and the National Federation of Independent Business;

63 6. Evaluate Virginia's existing public programs that provide health benefits to individuals who cannot  
64 afford health insurance, including, but not necessarily limited to, the Virginia Medicaid program, the  
65 Family and Access to Medical Insurance Security Plan, the State/Local Hospitalization program, and the  
66 Virginia Indigent Health Care Trust Fund;

67 7. Identify any changes necessary to integrate Virginia's public health benefit plans into any universal  
68 health insurance coverage program;

69 8. Assess the extent of care delivered through hospital emergency rooms as a result of the obligations  
70 provided by the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act to determine whether such  
71 care should be addressed in any universal coverage program;

72 9. Review and appraise (i) various cost controls, including, but not limited to, rate regulations and  
73 voluntary price caps, budget controls, monitoring and quality assurance, managed care options, high  
74 deductibles, and high copayments; and (ii) various types of health insurance, such as preferred provider  
75 plans, point of service plans, health maintenance organizations, health savings accounts, self-directed  
76 health plans, and discount plans and how these plans can be designed for groups and individuals; and

77 10. Develop the components of and an implementation plan for universal health care coverage for  
78 Virginians that requires personal responsibility of all citizens of the Commonwealth, including mandated  
79 health insurance coverage through private plans or through a state safety net insurance program, similar  
80 to required car insurance.

81 All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review  
82 Commission for this study, upon request.

83 The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall complete its meetings for the first year by  
84 November 30, 2006, and for the second year by November 30, 2007, and the Director shall submit to  
85 the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and  
86 recommendations no later than the first day of the next Regular Session of the General Assembly for  
87 each year. Each executive summary shall state whether the Joint Legislative Audit and Review  
88 Commission intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and  
89 recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summaries and reports  
90 shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for  
91 the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's  
92 website.  
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