

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 171

Requesting the Virginia Board of Education to survey Family Life Education Programs in public schools. Report.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 14, 2006
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 6, 2006

WHEREAS, after a comprehensive two-year legislative study, the Joint Subcommittee Studying Teenage Pregnancy Prevention in the Commonwealth recommended legislation to require every school division to implement a comprehensive, sequential Family Life Education program; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly of Virginia in 1987 enacted the legislative subcommittee's proposed legislation directing the Board of Education to develop standards of learning and curriculum guidelines for a comprehensive, sequential Family Life Education curriculum in grades kindergarten through 12; and

WHEREAS, public hearings and meetings were held around the state, and the Department of Education convened a Committee for Family Life Education composed of child development specialists, administrators, and representatives of the Parent-Teacher Association to assist in the development of the Standards of Learning objectives for Family Life Education; and

WHEREAS, in 1988, the Virginia Board of Education adopted regulations governing the Family Life Education program, including implementation guidelines requiring broad-based community involvement; and

WHEREAS, the regulations provided local school divisions the option of using the state program or using a locally developed program, provided the program includes the core of specified areas required in the curriculum; and

WHEREAS, school divisions throughout Virginia implemented the Family Life Education programs with the assistance of Community Involvement Teams composed of parents, educators, and community leaders; and

WHEREAS, by the 1989-90 school year, approximately 38 percent of local school divisions implemented the state-developed program while approximately 62 percent adopted a locally developed program; and

WHEREAS, a 1993 study by the Department of Education of Family Life Education found that abstinence was being taught as a primary element in the program and that only 1.7 percent of students opted out of all or a part of the Family Life Education program; and

WHEREAS, state guidelines for Family Life Education programs include 11 content areas, including health education and promotion, drug abuse prevention, and sexuality education; and

WHEREAS, in 1997, the Virginia Board of Education reversed its previous decision and made Family Life Education programs in Virginia's public schools an option for local school divisions; and

WHEREAS, the 1998 General Assembly session passed legislation to return Family Life Education to its previous required status, but that legislation was vetoed, and the veto was sustained; and

WHEREAS, research studies have identified that Family Life Education programs have proven to be effective in addressing the health needs of young people; and

WHEREAS, surveys show overwhelming support from Virginia citizens for Family Life Education programs in our public schools; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Education conducted a survey of family life education programs in local school divisions early in 2004; and

WHEREAS, only 75 of the 132 school divisions statewide responded to the survey; and

WHEREAS, there are school divisions in Virginia that have chosen not to have Family Life Education programs, but there is no documentation of those school divisions; and

WHEREAS, Family Life Education helps to prepare young men and women for healthy and productive lives in their families and their communities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Virginia Board of Education be requested to survey Family Life Education programs in the public schools.

The survey of Family Life Education programs by the Board of Education shall include all aspects of the program, including but not limited to whether the local school division offers Family Life Education instruction, the curricula used by all school divisions, the content of instruction, the qualifications of Family Life Education teachers and teacher training, the number and percentage of children who opt out each year, and parental and community involvement in the program.

The Board of Education shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary and a report of its progress in meeting the requests of this resolution no later than the first day

of the 2007 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as a report document 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.