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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 104

Offered January 9, 2008

Prefiled January 8, 2008

Requesting the Board of Education to recommend changes to the Standards of Quality and the Standards of Learning to transition from minimum competency requirements to standards that require academic excellence of all students. Report.

 Patron—Plum

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth's commitment to excellence in public education is evidenced in Article VIII of the Constitution of Virginia, which designates the General Assembly as the entity ultimately responsible for the establishment of public education in the Commonwealth, and also directs the Board of Education to establish standards of quality for the public schools, subject to revision by the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, excellence in public education continues to be a top priority for the Commonwealth, as evidenced by the Standards of Quality (SOQ), the constitutionally mandated, minimum programmatic requirements for the Commonwealth's public school divisions prescribed by the Board of Education, and the Standards of Quality are the statutory bases for determining the appropriations of public school basic aid funds; and

WHEREAS, the Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools describe the Commonwealth's expectations for student learning and achievement in grades K-12 in English, mathematics, science, history/social science, technology, the fine arts, foreign language, health and physical education, and driver education; and

WHEREAS, a rigorous instructional program based on high standards builds student knowledge and strengthens critical thinking skills, while fair assessments monitor progress and measure student performance and academic achievement; and

WHEREAS, according to the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "other countries have been rapidly improving their high school and college completion rates, while U.S. rates remain relatively stable, and because of this, the U.S. relative standing is falling"; and

WHEREAS, students with a rigorous high quality education are more likely to succeed in college and in employment, and are better equipped to compete successfully in the global marketplace; and

WHEREAS, the Center for Education reports that "American kids are good readers in comparison to many of their peers across the globe; however, math performance is mediocre, and while 4th and 8th graders scored above the international average in 2003, high school students were significantly outscored in science by their peers in 18 of the 38 participating countries with a performance that was below the international average in 2003"; and

WHEREAS, it was noted in the report, "Keeping Our Edge: Americans Speak on Education and Competitiveness," conducted for the Educational Testing Service by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc. & The Winston Group, in June 21, 2006, that "the American people recognize the important role that public schools play in contributing to our nation's achievements, and they are concerned about our ability to remain globally competitive unless our schools improve and challenge students more . . . The public feels strongly that America's schools must do a better job when it comes to preventing dropouts and raising standards, particularly in math and science, to ensure that high school graduates are prepared for college and for the increasingly technical jobs in the modern economy . . . The public — including parents of public school students, business leaders, teachers, administrators, and even high school students — agrees that standards and expectations must be higher"; and

WHEREAS, high quality public schools recognize that all students can learn, employ qualified teachers and school administrators, are funded commensurate with the expectations of exemplary educational opportunities and the standards to which students and teachers are accountable, provide the necessary tools and support to facilitate learning, and build strong connections with postsecondary institutions, business and industry, and other entities to better align curricula and graduation requirements with college admission standards and expectations, and the needs of the corporate community; and

WHEREAS, unfortunately, far too many students do not receive the promise of high quality equal educational opportunities because access to high quality public schools depends on the student's residence; and

WHEREAS, the ability of the Commonwealth to compete successfully in the national and

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59 international communities, as well as its security during this age, is largely dependent upon the academic
60 preparation of our students to meet the global challenges; and

61 WHEREAS, to accomplish these goals, fulfill the mission of public education expressed
62 constitutionally, statutorily, and through public policy, and to ensure the future of this Commonwealth
63 and its citizenry, minimum educational standards are no longer prudent nor sufficient; now, therefore, be
64 it

65 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Board of Education be
66 requested to recommend changes to the Standards of Quality and the Standards of Learning to transition
67 from minimum competency requirements to standards that require academic excellence of all
68 students[MT1] .

69 The Board of Education shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive
70 summary and report of its progress in meeting the request of this resolution no later than the first day of
71 the 2009 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary and report shall be
72 submitted for publication as a report document as provided in the procedures of the Division of
73 Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be
74 posted on the General Assembly's website.