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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 674

Offered January 14, 2009

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Designating September, in 2009 and in each succeeding year, as Older Virginians Mental Health Month in the Commonwealth.

Patrons—Brink and Watts

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, according to the Virginia Department for the Aging, the number of older adults is rising rapidly, particularly Virginians age 85 and older, who as a group will increase five times faster than the state's total population between 1990 and 2025; and

WHEREAS, studies show a critical need for additional mental health services for older people with major psychiatric illnesses now and an expectation that the need will more than double over the next 25 years; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2006 estimate of the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, close to 282,000 older Virginians suffered from a mental disorder in 2000, and a significant number of such cases were not treated, resulting in high costs; and

WHEREAS, the combination of geriatric inpatient-unit downsizing, the increasing dual diagnoses of psychiatric illness and dementia in older adults, and the difficulties faced by long-term care facilities and community-based programs in serving this population calls for immediate attention by policymakers, practitioners, and the public; and

WHEREAS, State Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services Board policy "recognizing the prevalence of mental illness, [intellectual disabilities] and substance use disorder diagnoses among older adults, the growing numbers of these older adults, and the specialized needs of this population, encourage[s] and support[s] the development of high quality, accessible, responsive and effective services for these older adults"; and

WHEREAS, older adults benefit from a mental health system that promotes recovery, self-determination, empowerment, and responsiveness to their unique and complex requirements, including aging in place in the community when possible; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby designate September, in 2009 and in each succeeding year, as Older Virginians Mental Health Month in the Commonwealth to heighten public awareness of the needs of older citizens and to promote discussion of strategies to address them; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates post the designation of this day on the General Assembly's website.

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