

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 678

Requesting the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and the Virginia Community College System to study the shortage of classroom teachers in the Commonwealth. Report.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 6, 2009

Agreed to by the Senate, February 24, 2009

WHEREAS, Article VIII, Section 1 of the Constitution of Virginia requires that the Commonwealth provide for a "system of free public elementary and secondary schools for all children of school age throughout the Commonwealth, and shall seek to ensure that an educational program of high quality is established and continually maintained"; and

WHEREAS, essential to meeting the constitutional responsibilities for the education of Virginia's children, the Commonwealth declares in Standard 1 of the Standards of Quality, (§ 22.1-253.13:1 of the Code of Virginia) that "the quality of education is dependent upon the provision of the appropriate working environment, benefits, and salaries necessary to ensure the availability of high quality instructional personnel"; and

WHEREAS, teachers encourage intellectual curiosity and inquiry, nurture innate gifts and creativity, acquaint students with new ways of viewing ordinary things, and challenge students to think, imagine, and dream of possibilities beyond their horizons; and

WHEREAS, the transference of our heritage and the ability to stimulate an appreciation of learning to provide for an educated citizenry is threatened by a severe shortage of classroom teachers; and

WHEREAS, the National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices predicts a need for 2.2 million more teachers by 2009, and cites the provision of qualified teachers as "the most significant area" leaders might tackle when seeking to improve public education; and

WHEREAS, demographers agree that the average age of persons in the teaching profession was raised due to a downturn in hiring in the 1980s and 1990s; therefore, the teaching profession has been severely affected by the departure of scores of baby boomers from the workforce; and

WHEREAS, shortages are expected to be more severe in the southern and western states and in urban and rural schools, with more specific shortage areas in the disciplines of science, mathematics, special education, foreign language, and technological studies, among males at the elementary and middle school levels, and among minority teachers in all disciplines and grade levels; and

WHEREAS, as required by No Child Left Behind, public schools must employ qualified teachers in every classroom, and providing for qualified, competent, and gifted classroom teachers is a shared responsibility between the Board of Education and Virginia's institutions of higher education; however, in 2005 Virginia's public and private teacher preparation programs prepared only 3,066 teachers for Virginia's classrooms; and

WHEREAS, according to the Virginia Department of Education the number of new and replacement teachers required in Virginia's K-12 public education system averages more than 11,000 per year; and

WHEREAS, states nationwide are utilizing lower cost community colleges as pre-teacher preparation programs that involve overview and foundational courses required for classroom observations and licensure to address the teacher shortage; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and the Virginia Community College System be requested to study the shortage of classroom teachers in the Commonwealth. The study shall specifically explore methods to attract students to the Virginia Community College System for the first two years of a teacher preparation program.

In conducting its study, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and the Virginia Community College System shall consider: (i) factors affecting teacher recruitment and retention in Virginia; (ii) effective teacher recruitment initiatives in other states; (iii) the work and recommendations of recent legislative and executive branch studies addressing teacher shortage and employment issues; (iv) effective use of community colleges in other states to attract new teacher candidates; (v) such other related issues as it deems necessary.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and the Virginia Community College System for this study, upon request.

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and the Virginia Community College System shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2009, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents

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and reports no later than the first day of the 2010 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.