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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 133

Offered January 13, 2010

Prefiled January 13, 2010

Requesting the State Health Commissioner to promote and emphasize yearly mammograms as an effective tool in breast cancer prevention. Report.

Patrons—McQuinn, Herring, McClellan and Ward

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, breast cancer, a disease in which malignant cells form in the tissues of the breasts, afflicts women in the United States more than any other type of cancer except skin cancer and it is second only to lung cancer as a cause of cancer death in women, according to the National Breast Cancer Foundation; and

WHEREAS, the National Breast Cancer Foundation reports that annually nearly 200,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and more than 40,000 women will die of the disease, and that approximately 1,700 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer and 450 men will die each year; and

WHEREAS, breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among African American women and "African Americans have the highest death rate and shortest survival of any racial and ethnic group in the United States for most cancers," as reported by the American Cancer Society; and

WHEREAS, for the past two decades, many women have heeded the recommended annual mammogram screening beginning at age 40, and early detection of breast cancer is key to successful treatment and survival; and

WHEREAS, mammograms have been instrumental in the early detection of breast cancer, saving thousands of lives; and

WHEREAS, recently, new government guidelines by the United States Preventive Services Task Force of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommend fewer screenings, that most women should begin annual mammogram screening at age 50 rather than age 40, that women age 50 to 74 should have mammograms every two years rather than every year, and that doctors should stop teaching women to self-examine on a regular basis; and

WHEREAS, the new guidelines, which call into question the benefit of mammography, have generated tremendous controversy and confusion among health professionals and women, and there is fear among women and their families that the new guidance to physicians, insurance companies, and policymakers will restrict access to mammograms, an effective screening tool in breast cancer prevention, potentially jeopardizing women's health and minimizing early detection of breast cancer and successful treatment outcomes; and

WHEREAS, a consistent message on the benefits and advised frequency of mammograms for women in Virginia would help dispel misinformation and fear, as well as encourage women to take a proactive stance regarding their health, and the State Health Commissioner should address this important health care issue to protect the health and well-being of thousands of women and men in the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the State Health Commissioner be requested to promote and emphasize yearly mammograms as an effective tool in breast cancer prevention.

The State Health Commissioner shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary and report of its progress in meeting the request of this resolution no later than the first day of the 2011 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary and report shall be submitted for publication 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.

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