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SENATE BILL NO. 549

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions
on March 2, 2010)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Barker)

A BILL to require the Secretaries of Health and Human Resources and Technology to evaluate opportunities for developing a network for geospatial health research.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. That the Secretaries of Health and Human Resources and Technology shall evaluate opportunities to partner with nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth to develop a network for geospatial health research. Such evaluation shall include consideration of opportunities for:

1. Establishing relationships with academic programs throughout the Commonwealth that use geospatial analysis to understand and assess environmental health, public health, and health care issues, to strengthen programs through technical assistance, provide support for graduate research, and facilitate sharing of education opportunities across institutions, including (i) developing a network of experts and a system of peer review that does not limit individual institution's academic freedom; (ii) supporting educational advancement; (iii) providing a conduit for seeking grant funding for research and practice; (iv) supplying technical geographic information system infrastructure support; and (v) assisting state health agencies, policy makers, and health administrators in understanding optimal targeting and utilization of resources;

2. Supporting and coordinating academic, state agency, and private sector expertise in geospatial analysis, health policy, health planning, environmental health analysis, and epidemiology and facilitating the development of new approaches and methodologies to sustain effective public health and health care interventions across all health-related state agencies throughout the Commonwealth;

3. Coordinating, with the Virginia Geographic Information Network Division, the development of a clearinghouse for geospatially referenced health and health systems' relevant data through a web-based geospatial data-sharing system;

4. Expanding research opportunities and increasing potential funding opportunities for relevant public health research in Virginia by seeking private sector grants and other funding to the benefit of health and health care stakeholders throughout the Commonwealth;

5. Providing a broad array of private and public entities with the requisite data to develop appropriate environmental health analysis, health care delivery models, and assessment within the health and health care system in Virginia and providing technical assistance in analyzing such data;

6. Functioning as a service organization to cost-effectively leverage existing hardware, software, data, applications, and personnel to support new research projects within its partner organizations; and

7. Making geospatial services and data available to faculty and students from educational institutions as well as to the Department of Health, public health officials and researchers, and other appropriate persons, with the goal of improving existing public health programs, developing new evidence-based initiatives, and better informing the health policy decision-making process through health-related assessment activities.

§ 2. That the Secretaries of Health and Human Resources and Technology shall report their findings to the Governor; the Senate Committees on Education and Health, Finance, and General Laws and Technology; and the House Committees on Appropriations, Health, Welfare and Institutions, and Science and Technology no later than December 1, 2010.