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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 26
AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Rules
on February 12, 2010)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Marsh)

Directing the Virginia Commission on Youth to study the effects of the economic recession on public schools and families in Virginia. Report.

WHEREAS, the realities of the current economic crisis, symbolized by record home foreclosures; failed banks; panicked markets; recent high-profile bankruptcies, mergers, and consolidations of American businesses; the financial bailout of Wall Street and American automobile manufacturers; rising unemployment, layoffs, and downsizings; and closings of many retailers have resulted in an unprecedented decline in the standard of living for many citizens; and

WHEREAS, much has been written and reported regarding the implications of the economic crisis on the global economic system and for the future viability of the American economy; however, the effects of the economic crisis's collateral damage on children, the educational system, and families are trapped in the peripheral vision of many market analysts, social scientists, and policy makers; and

WHEREAS, the strain of the continuing economic crisis has decimated family wages, created financial hardships, interrupted college educations, caused breakdowns in family relationships, and made many families and children homeless; and

WHEREAS, many children are frightened and bereft of hope, stability, dignity, and security, leaving distressed parents and extended family members oblivious as to how to help them endure a variety of consequences that children generally do not have to face; and

WHEREAS, many of these children are school age, and due to the foreclosure of their homes, their lives have been disrupted and they are forced to move away from friends, family, and their schools; and

WHEREAS, the stress and burdens that they bring with them to the classroom alter the positive school ambience and impede concentration and learning, and public schools have experienced an increase in the number of homeless students and those qualifying for the Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program; and

WHEREAS, with budgets already strained to meet educational mandates and impending reductions in funding, public schools must continue to provide quality education and related support services while being fiscally impacted by the growing number of homeless students and challenged to meet the benchmarks for student achievement required by federal and state laws; and

WHEREAS, given the bleak economic outlook, the trickle-down effects of the economic crisis on children, families, and public schools will likely continue in the foreseeable future and efforts to minimize the burdens on public schools, reassure our children, and preserve families must be a priority; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Commission on Youth be directed to study the effects of the economic recession on public schools and families in Virginia.

In conducting its study, the Commission on Youth shall (i) evaluate the effects of the economic crisis on public schools in Virginia; (ii) determine the number of school-age children affected by recent home foreclosures associated with the decline of the housing market, unemployment of a parent, and homelessness, and, if possible, correlate these events in the lives of school children to academic performance; (iii) determine whether the economic crisis has contributed to an increase in family dysfunction, unemployment, crime, familial breakdown, divorce and separation, substance abuse, mental health problems, school and college dropout rates, and domestic violence; (iv) ascertain how and which educational programs and services have been reduced or eliminated by public schools as a result of funding reductions due to the economic crisis; (v) determine whether there has been an increase in the number of homeless students in Virginia public schools, and the fiscal and programmatic effect of such increase; (vi) determine ways to assist public schools, children, and their families in coping with the economic crisis so as to minimize adverse consequences to them and governmental agencies; and (vii) consider such other matters as the Commission deems pertinent to carrying out the objectives of the study.

In the course of its deliberations, the Commission on Youth shall provide opportunities for the participation of professional and community organizations, the corporate and faith communities, and other persons with expertise and interest in public and higher education and the welfare of children and their families.

Technical assistance shall be provided by the Departments of Education, Social Services, Labor and Industry, and Behavioral Health and Developmental Services; and the staffs of the Senate Committee on Finance and the House Committee on Appropriations. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide

60 assistance to the Commission on Youth for this study, upon request.

61 The Commission on Youth shall complete its meetings for the first year by November 30, 2010, and
62 for the second year by November 30, 2011, and the chairman shall submit to the Division of Legislative
63 Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first
64 day of the next Regular Session of the General Assembly for each year. Each executive summary shall
65 state whether the Commission on Youth intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a
66 report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The
67 executive summaries and reports shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of
68 Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be
69 posted on the General Assembly's website.