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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 610

Offered January 14, 2015

Prefiled January 13, 2015

Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study specific early childhood development programs, prenatal to age five, in the Commonwealth in order for the General Assembly to determine the best strategy for future early childhood development investments. Report.

Patrons—Jones and Peace

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, according to the Virginia Department of Education, children who repeat at least one grade in kindergarten through grade three cost taxpayers in the Commonwealth approximately \$80 million per year; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2013 Voices for Virginia's Children report, one in eight children in the Commonwealth arrive in kindergarten without the basic skills to succeed in school; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2011 Annie E. Casey Foundation report, children who do not demonstrate proficiency in reading in third grade are four times more likely to fail to graduate from high school than children who demonstrate proficiency in reading in third grade; and

WHEREAS, national data indicates that children who enter the elementary through secondary education system without sufficient preparedness are more likely to fall behind grade-level expectations, move into special education, and drop out of high school, and less likely to enter postsecondary education programs; and

WHEREAS, although the Virginia Preschool Initiative has been in effect since 1994, the General Assembly has directed only one study to evaluate its effectiveness, accountability, and program costs: House Joint Resolution No. 729 of the Acts of Assembly of 2007; and

WHEREAS, in 1993, the Virginia Board of Education, the Virginia Department of Education, and the former Virginia Council on Child Day Care and Early Childhood Programs developed a report entitled "A Study of Programs Serving At-Risk Four-Year-Old Children" that found that "[t]here is no central data base tracking all the funding streams or demographic information on at-risk children or the quality of the programs" and that such information is "either non-existent, or inconsistent as well as scattered among agencies"; and

WHEREAS, no effort to track such information in a central database has been completed; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2011 National Conference of State Legislatures report, Virginia spent more than \$229 million in federal, state, and grant funding on "early care" programs including child care, the Virginia Preschool Initiative, home visiting programs, and additional programs, notably mental health programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission be directed to study specific early childhood development programs, prenatal to age five, in the Commonwealth in order for the General Assembly to determine the best strategy for future early childhood development investments.

In conducting its study, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) shall:

1. To the greatest extent possible, focus on early childhood development programs currently supported with state assistance including the Virginia Preschool Initiative, locally based programs that receive federal child care and Title I assistance, family support and home visiting programs, and quality improvement models such as the Virginia Star Quality Initiative;

2. Include a listing of the lead agency, a description and the objectives of the program, an identification of the target audience, and a catalog of the types and amounts of funding for each early childhood program studied;

3. Identify eligibility requirements and characteristics of populations that each program serves;

4. Assess program design, implementation, and measurement of outcomes;

5. Assess program outcomes, including effectiveness and cost-effectiveness;

6. Assess alignment of programs with kindergarten readiness;

7. Identify best practices in the Commonwealth and other states for program design, implementation, and outcome measurement;

8. Review other aspects of each program as deemed appropriate; and

9. Provide options for improving early childhood development programs in the Commonwealth.

Technical assistance shall be provided to JLARC by appropriate state agencies. To assist JLARC in its work, local school boards shall provide standardized test result data and other information to JLARC,

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59 and school board personnel shall meet with the staff of JLARC, upon request, to discuss program
60 implementation and effectiveness so that JLARC may satisfy the requirements of this resolution. All
61 agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to JLARC for this study, upon request.

62 The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall complete its meetings by November 30,
63 2015, and the chairman shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive
64 summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the 2016 Regular Session of
65 the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether JLARC intends to submit to the
66 General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a
67 House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the
68 procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents
69 and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.