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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 597

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Directing the Joint Commission on Health Care to study heroin use in the Commonwealth. Report.

Patrons—Marshall, R.G., Bell, John J., Bell, Richard P., Freitas, Kory, LaRock, Lingamfelter and Webert

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, heroin is an opioid drug that is synthesized from morphine, a naturally occurring substance extracted from the seed pod of the Asian opium poppy plant; and

WHEREAS, when injected, inhaled, or smoked, heroin interacts with opioid receptors in many parts of the brain, including those that control automatic processes critical to life such as blood pressure and respiration, and an overdose of heroin may result in cessation of these critical processes; and

WHEREAS, heroin is highly addictive, with an estimated 23 percent of users becoming dependent on the drug; and

WHEREAS, rates of heroin use and the number of heroin overdoses in the Commonwealth have increased substantially in recent years; and

WHEREAS, many initiatives are underway in the Commonwealth to address the growing epidemic of heroin use and to prevent heroin overdoses in the Commonwealth, including education, awareness and prevention efforts, and efforts to increase the availability and utilization of naloxone to prevent opioid overdoses; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Commission on Health Care be directed to study heroin use in the Commonwealth.

In conducting its study, the Joint Commission on Health Care shall (i) determine rates of heroin use and heroin overdose in the Commonwealth; (ii) study the reasons individuals become addicted to heroin and the pathways that lead individuals to heroin use, including whether individuals who overdose on heroin have also used other illegal substances and what those substances are; (iii) identify initiatives underway in the Commonwealth to address the problem of heroin use and heroin overdose, including education and awareness and prevention efforts; (iv) study the impact of state and federal laws and regulations on the availability of naloxone and other drugs used for the prevention of heroin overdose, including who may possess and administer naloxone, the processes by which individuals may obtain naloxone, whether law-enforcement agencies and other individuals authorized to possess and administer naloxone actually possess and administer naloxone to prevent overdoses, and how often naloxone has been used to prevent overdoses in the Commonwealth; and (v) make recommendations for improving the Commonwealth's response to the heroin crisis and its efforts to reduce heroin use and the incidence of heroin overdoses.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Commission on Health Care for this study, upon request.

The Joint Commission on Health Care shall complete its meetings for the first year by November 30, 2017, and for the second year by November 30, 2018, and the chairman shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the next Regular Session of the General Assembly for each year. Each executive summary shall state whether the Joint Commission on Health Care intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summaries and reports shall be submitted 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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