

17102564D

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 296

Offered January 11, 2017

Prefiled January 11, 2017

Directing the Joint Commission on Health Care to study the needs of older adults who are incarcerated or are being released from prison. Report.

Patron—Ebbin

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the number of older adults incarcerated within Virginia's prison system is continually growing; and

WHEREAS, the older prison population presents extensive medical needs as such prisoners, compared to younger inmates, have higher rates of both mild and serious health conditions, including mental health conditions, and physical and sensory disabilities, have an increased risk of contracting major diseases, and are more likely to require frequent dental and periodontal work; and

WHEREAS, the Journal of the American Medical Association reported that inmates older than 55 years of age have an average of three chronic health conditions and as many as 20 percent have a mental illness; and

WHEREAS, consequent to such health issues and increased risks, older inmates have a heightened need for medical services and devices, such as walkers, wheelchairs, hearing aids, and breathing aids, and a greater need for assistance with activities of daily living; and

WHEREAS, older inmates who are released from prison into the community similarly have a heightened need for health care services, including mental health services, and many are ultimately hospitalized after release; and

WHEREAS, older inmates who are released into the community also have a greater need for community services and supports and present unique needs for employment and safe, appropriate, and affordable housing options; and

WHEREAS, the availability of health care services, including mental health services, community services and supports, employment opportunities, and appropriate housing options or alternative facility-based care for older adults released from prison is necessary to ensure their successful transition into the community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Joint Commission on Health Care be directed to study the needs of older adults who are incarcerated or are being released from prison.

In conducting its study, the Joint Commission on Health Care (JCHC) shall (i) study the unique needs of older adults who are incarcerated within Virginia's prison system or are being released back into the community, including needs related to community services and supports, housing, case management, health care, including mental health, and employment; (ii) identify and examine the effectiveness of all existing state programs, services, and supports designed to help older adults released from prison in the Commonwealth secure necessary health care, housing, and employment; and (iii) recommend strategies or programs to ensure the safety and well-being of the growing number of older adults who are incarcerated within Virginia's prison system or are being released into the community in recognition of their unique needs.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to JCHC for this study, upon request.

The Joint Commission on Health Care shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2017, 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 2018 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether JCHC 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 summary and report 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.

INTRODUCED

SJ296