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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 614

Offered January 9, 2019

Prefiled January 1, 2019

Directing the Virginia State Crime Commission to study forensic nursing in the Commonwealth. Report.

Patrons—Delaney, Adams, D.M., Carr, Convirs-Fowler, Edmunds, Kory, Lindsey, Rasoul, Reid, Rodman, Roem, Sickles, Simon, Sullivan and Tyler; Senator: McClellan

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, forensic nurses are registered nurses or advanced practice nurses who have received additional education and training to work in a variety of fields, including sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, elder mistreatment, human trafficking of minors and adults, death investigations, and corrections, and in the aftermath of natural disasters; and

WHEREAS, there are currently more than 4,000 members of the International Association of Forensic Nurses in over 25 countries; and

WHEREAS, certain forensic nursing programs in the Commonwealth employ full-time forensic nurses, while others provide full coverage, coverage only as needed, or limited coverage hours, and the majority of forensic nursing programs are based in hospitals; and

WHEREAS, there are approximately 14 forensic nursing programs in the Commonwealth and forensic nurses from the Bon Secours Greater Richmond program alone examined over 2,300 individuals in 2017; and

WHEREAS, forensic nurses aid in anti-violence efforts and collect critical evidence for law enforcement, in addition to providing testimony used to prosecute perpetrators of violent and abusive acts; and

WHEREAS, many programs operate at a financial loss due to the limited reimbursements offered for physical evidence recovery kits and costs associated with providing testimony; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia State Crime Commission be directed to study forensic nursing in the Commonwealth.

In conducting its study, the Virginia State Crime Commission (the Commission) shall (i) identify all existing forensic nursing programs in the Commonwealth, including graduate programs and certifications; (ii) determine geographic regions of the Commonwealth in which forensic nursing programs or forensic nurses do not currently exist and determine what coverage is available in those regions, if any, and whether coverage is provided from neighboring regions; (iii) identify the current funding sources for existing forensic nursing programs and estimate the costs associated with and potential funding sources for establishing forensic nursing programs in geographic regions across the Commonwealth with a current gap in coverage; (iv) analyze and provide an estimate of the average costs associated with collecting forensic evidence and providing testimony in a court of law and identify funding sources for testimony costs; (v) review the current forensic nursing workforce in the Commonwealth and identify opportunities to increase availability of forensic nursing certifications to nurses; (vi) consider insurance reimbursement opportunities for forensic nursing services performed; and (vii) evaluate existing forensic nursing programs in other states and identify best practices, including telehealth, that could be utilized in the Commonwealth.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Commission by the Virginia Department of Health Professions and the Virginia Board of Nursing. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Commission for this study, upon request.

The Virginia State Crime Commission shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2019, 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 2020 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether the Commission 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.

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