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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 682

Offered January 9, 2019

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Requesting the Department of Health Professions to study options for utilizing physicians trained outside the United States to address shortages of physicians in rural and underserved areas of the Commonwealth. Report.

Patrons—Tran and Lopez

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, according to the Department of Health Professions (the Department), as of 2016, only seven percent of Virginia physicians are employed in non-metropolitan counties in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, there is a shortage of physicians in rural and underserved areas of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, foreign-trained physicians are often willing to serve in remote, rural areas and underserved communities; and have the potential to alleviate the shortage of physicians in rural areas of the Commonwealth;

WHEREAS, in order to practice in the United States, foreign-trained physicians must meet the same strict requirements applied to graduates of United States medical schools; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Health Professions be requested to study options for utilizing physicians who already reside in the Commonwealth but were trained outside the United States to address shortages of physicians in rural and underserved areas of the Commonwealth. The Department shall convene a workgroup composed of representatives of the Department of Health Professions; the Department of Health; the Virginia Rural Health Association; the Virginia Health Workforce Development Authority; the Medical Society of Virginia, including licensed physicians trained within and outside of the United States; groups representing the interests of immigrants to the Commonwealth; groups representing health care providers, including the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association; representatives of graduate medical education programs in Virginia; and such other stakeholders as the Department deems appropriate to assist with such study.

In conducting its study, the Department of Health Professions shall (i) identify the need for physicians in the Commonwealth's rural and underserved communities; (ii) describe, to the extent practicable, the population of foreign-trained physicians in the Commonwealth and the potential economic impact to Virginia if these physicians are able to practice to the full extent of their training; (iii) identify initiatives and programs from other states that assist foreign-trained physicians in preparing for the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE); (iv) identify Commonwealth licensing requirements that pose unnecessary barriers to practice in the Commonwealth for foreign-trained physicians; (v) identify steps the Commonwealth has already taken to facilitate practice in the Commonwealth for foreign-trained physicians; (vi) identify and review policies that assess the readiness of residency programs in the Commonwealth for foreign-trained physicians who have gained professional experience in supervised internships and other work experiences outside of the United States; (vii) identify options for addressing English-language barriers that foreign-trained physicians encounter in preparing for licensure examinations, including the USMLE; and (viii) assess the degree to which existing programs in Virginia facilitate the ability of foreign-trained physicians to practice in rural and underserved areas of the Commonwealth, and identify potential new policies or programs.

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

The Department of Health Professions shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an interim executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations no later than December 1, 2019. The final executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations shall be submitted to the Governor and the General Assembly by July 1, 2020. Each executive summary shall state whether the Department of Health Professions intends to submit the document for publication as a House or Senate document, 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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