

LD4937836

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 604

Offered January 23, 1995

Directing the Youth Commission to study juvenile justice reform.

Patrons—Jones, J.C., Abbitt, Almand, Armstrong, Ball, Barlow, Behm, Bennett, Christian, Clement, Cohen, Cooper, Copeland, Cox, Cranwell, Crittenden, Croshaw, Cunningham, Darner, Davies, Deeds, Diamonstein, Grayson, Hall, Heilig, Hull, Jackson, Johnson, Jones, D.C., Keating, Marshall, Mayer, McDonnell, Melvin, Mims, Moore, Moss, Puller, Reynolds, Robinson, Scott, Shuler, Spruill, Stump, Thomas, Van Yahres and Woodrum; Senators: Calhoun, Gartlan, Houck and Lucas

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the nature and severity of juvenile delinquency has changed drastically over the last decades; and

WHEREAS, the juvenile correctional agency, the Department of Youth and Family Services, has only been in existence for five years; and

WHEREAS, at the time of the inception of the new Department, the Commonwealth suffered a recession which adversely affect the agency's budget, and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly enacted the Comprehensive Services Act in 1992 which altered the ways communities plan for and provide services to a segment of adjudicated youth, and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly enacted the Serious Juvenile Offender legislation in 1994 which significantly altered the factors the court relies upon when transferring a juvenile to adult court as well as instituted longer terms for determinate sentencing for a segment of the juvenile offender population, and

WHEREAS, many of the principles underlying the juvenile justice system in Virginia and throughout the nation have recently been questioned in light of changing juvenile crime trends, and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth has not undertaken a comprehensive review of the juvenile justice system since 1977 in the recodification of § 16.1 of the Code of Virginia, and

WHEREAS, the lack of a comprehensive reassessment of the system has served to undermine the public confidence in the juvenile justice system, therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Commission on Youth undertake a comprehensive study of the juvenile justice system in Virginia with the goal of suggesting reform to increase the system's efficiency and effectiveness in responding to juvenile delinquency. The Commission's study shall include but not be limited to: efficiency of maintaining status offenders within the juvenile court system, docketing issues affecting system management, range of community options available to the court, legal procedures applicable to current offender populations, training support provided to the court's service unit staff and judiciary and recommendations for system improvement through legislative and administrative reform. To aid in the study the Commission is authorized to establish a Task Force which shall be comprised of the Commission on Youth members, two attorneys for the Commonwealth, one to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates and one to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; two juvenile and domestic relations judges, one to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates and one to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; two representatives from local law enforcement, one to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates and one to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; one member of the defense bar to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates; and two representatives of the local treatment community, one to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates and one to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections. The Director of the Department of Youth and Family Services and the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court shall serve as ex-officio members.

The indirect costs of this study shall not exceed \$20,000.

The Commission on Youth shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1996 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for processing legislative documents.

INTRODUCED

HJ604