

1996 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 109

Requesting the Secretary of Administration and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources to develop a policy for considering reimbursement for telemedicine services by state health programs.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 8, 1996

Agreed to by the Senate, February 29, 1996

WHEREAS, rural communities often lack adequate access to health care services; and

WHEREAS, many rural Virginians must travel long distances to receive specialized medical services, numerous rural areas are experiencing a shortage of primary care providers, and a number of rural hospitals are under financial stress due to declining utilization; and

WHEREAS, telemedicine is the use of telecommunications technology to deliver health care services and health professions education from a central site to distant areas; and

WHEREAS, telemedicine has been used to deliver high quality, specialized health care services and education programs from urban medical centers to distant rural areas; and

WHEREAS, telemedicine could allow more rural Virginians to receive care in their home community instead of traveling to a distant site; and

WHEREAS, telemedicine could allow rural hospitals to continue serving certain patients who would otherwise travel to a distant hospital for care; and

WHEREAS, telemedicine could support efforts to recruit and retain primary care providers in underserved rural areas by supplying convenient access to specialty consultation and continuing education programs; and

WHEREAS, telemedicine demonstration projects are now in progress in at least 35 states including Virginia; and

WHEREAS, third-party reimbursement of telemedicine services is essential for expanding the availability of telemedicine services in rural areas of the Commonwealth, particularly those services involving long-distance consultation via two-way interactive television; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth, through the State Employee Health Benefit Program and the Virginia Medicaid program, provides third-party reimbursement for some but not all available telemedicine services; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Medicaid program has recently initiated third-party reimbursement for selected interactive television telemedicine services, while the State Employee Health Benefits Program does not provide reimbursement for such services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Secretary of Administration and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources be requested to develop a policy for considering reimbursement for telemedicine services by state health programs, including, but not limited to, interactive television telemedicine services, subject to appropriate standards of cost-effectiveness and quality assurance.

The Secretaries of Administration and Health and Human Resources shall provide staff support for the study. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Secretaries, upon request.

The Secretaries shall submit a progress report to the Governor and the General Assembly by September 1, 1996, and shall complete their work in time to submit their findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1997 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

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