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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 113

Offered January 22, 1996

Requesting that the Virginia State Crime Commission, in cooperation with certain state agencies, study the retirement benefits of correctional and parole officers, the development of a differential pay system for correctional officers, and the establishment of drug testing policies for employees of the Department of Corrections.

Patrons—Woodrum and Almand; Senator: Howell

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, with the increasing number of inmates both correctional officers and probation and parole officers face greater challenges, increased job stresses, and potential personal safety risks; and

WHEREAS, salaries and retirement benefits for correctional officers and probation and parole officers are not on parity with many of the local law-enforcement officials, particularly jail personnel; and

WHEREAS, correctional officers in the more secure facilities face a greater potential for physical injury and severe emotional stress; and

WHEREAS, as a consequence of the increased risk, there are a significant number of transfers to lower custody institutions, other state agencies, and resignations from state service, creating instability in the workforce; and

WHEREAS, probation and parole officers face almost daily contact with ex-offenders with histories of violence; and

WHEREAS, probation and parole officers have increasing caseloads which make it difficult to adequately serve their clients and create serious emotional stress and public safety risks; and

WHEREAS, there is a significant turnover rate for both correctional officers and probation and parole officers; and

WHEREAS, staff retention is critical to public safety issues relating to the responsibility of the Department of Corrections; and

WHEREAS, employees of the Department of Corrections have a responsibility to protect the public safety; and

WHEREAS, questions have arisen as to the potential for substance abuse in some corrections personnel; and

WHEREAS, the Department is dependent upon employees who are free of illicit drugs; and

WHEREAS, employees involved in illegal drug use are susceptible to corruption; and

WHEREAS, illegal drug use poses an unacceptable risk to the Department due to security issues; and

WHEREAS, there are currently no routine or random drug testing policies for corrections personnel; and

WHEREAS, such policies may have a significant fiscal impact on the budget of the Department; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia State Crime Commission, in a study on staffing issues in Virginia's adult correctional institutions, recommended that a study be conducted to develop recommendations which provide a means for the development of competitive benefits to enhance recruitment and retention of correctional officers and probation and parole officers, the development of a differential pay system for institutional personnel, and the development of drug testing policies for corrections personnel; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia State Crime Commission be directed to conduct a study on retirement benefits for correctional officers and probation and parole officers to determine strategies to improve recruitment efforts and retention of correctional officers and probation and parole officers; develop a differential pay system for institutional personnel; and propose drug testing policies for corrections personnel for consideration by the 1997 General Assembly. The Department of Corrections, the Department of Personnel and Training, and the Department of Planning and Budget shall provide technical assistance. The Crime Commission staff will also work with the staffs of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees to determine the fiscal impact of the recommendations.

The State Crime Commission shall complete its work in time to submit its 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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