

1996 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 181

Directing the Virginia Commission on Youth and the Virginia Housing Study Commission to study homeless children in the Commonwealth.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 9, 1996

Agreed to by the Senate, February 29, 1996

WHEREAS, the number of children, with and without their families, seeking assistance at homeless shelters is increasing dramatically in the nation and in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the international Union of Gospel Mission, a network of 250 rescue missions, indicates that children and adolescents now constitute eleven percent of the homeless population, an increase of three percent in one year; and

WHEREAS, in 1995, the Virginia Coalition for the Homeless reported that twenty-seven percent of the persons who received shelter from one of the 128 participating programs in Virginia ranged from infants to age seventeen; and

WHEREAS, women and children comprise forty-five percent of the family units seeking shelter in Virginia, and families that are turned away from shelters due to unavailable space often sleep in abandoned buildings, automobiles, or other unsuitable accommodations; and

WHEREAS, the stressful experience of homelessness may adversely affect the emotional and physical health and development of such children; and

WHEREAS, because the families of homeless children move frequently and the children of such families transfer from school to school, they often demonstrate poor academic performance; and

WHEREAS, homeless children often have inadequate diets and may be at greater risk for illness than their peers; and

WHEREAS, in November 1989, the Department for Children and the Council on the Status of Women conducted a thorough study on homeless families in Virginia, and the Virginia Housing Study Commission has issued comprehensive reports and recommendations on homelessness, many of which have been implemented throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, these efforts notwithstanding, the current status of homeless children and their families needs to be ascertained, and creative strategies must be developed to meet the multiple and complex needs of such children and their families; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia Commission on Youth and the Virginia Housing Study Commission be directed to study homeless children in the Commonwealth. The Commissions shall (i) determine the number and demographic characteristics of Virginia's homeless children; (ii) identify the particular problems facing Virginia's homeless children and the barriers to providing services to them; and (iii) recommend appropriate and feasible ways and alternatives to improve the lives of Virginia's homeless children.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Commissions, upon request.

The Virginia Commission on Youth and the Virginia Housing Study Commission 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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