

## 1996 SESSION

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### HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 241

*Continuing the Joint Subcommittee Studying School Drop Out and Ways to Promote the Development of Self-esteem in Youth and Adults as the Standing Subcommittee on School Dropout Prevention.*

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

Agreed to by the Senate, February 21, 1996

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the modest gains since 1989 in the reduction of the dropout rate among Virginia's school age children, leaving school before high school graduation continues to plague the nation and the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, although the tide of students dropping out of school has ebbed somewhat, 15,934 students still dropped out of the public schools during the 1993-1994 school year; and

WHEREAS, the problems in defining, counting, and calculating the dropout rate remain unresolved, and inconsistencies in pupil accounting and reporting practices make it difficult to determine the magnitude of the problem and assess its real social, economic, and fiscal impact on the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, in Virginia one out of every four ninth-graders still fails to graduate, and more students are likely to demonstrate poor academic performance plus require more prevention, intervention, remediation, and acceleration because they are unable to meet the more rigorous curriculum established with the implementation of revised Standards of Learning; and

WHEREAS, over the last three years as the emphasis on dropout prevention has waned, the numbers of students experiencing academic failure and subsequently leaving school have begun to climb; and

WHEREAS, poor academic achievement, behavior, health and financial problems, crime, and teen pregnancy are most often cited by dropouts as their reasons for dropping out; and

WHEREAS, in December 1995, more than 80 percent of the state's prison population did not have a high school education, and 46 percent of the youth in Virginia's juvenile correctional centers were identified as eligible for special education services; and

WHEREAS, it is believed that a disproportionate number of poor, urban, African-American youth drop out of school, although recent survey data for Virginia indicate that the problem crosses all socioeconomic levels; and

WHEREAS, the school dropout problem has taken its toll on this generation and promises to decimate the next generation, perpetuating a cycle of illiteracy, crime, and economic dependency for years to come in many families; and

WHEREAS, because only one in six jobs today is suitable for the high school dropout and this figure is expected to worsen as increasing technology requires a highly skilled and educated workforce; and

WHEREAS, excessively high dropout rates threaten the Commonwealth's economic stability now and its security in the coming century; and

WHEREAS, the Joint Subcommittee Studying School Drop Out and Ways to Promote the Development of Self-esteem in Youth and Adults, House Joint Resolution No. 235 (1994), has found that due to the complexity of the problem and the severity of the consequences of school dropout for all involved, including the exorbitant costs to our educational, health and mental health, employment and social services programs plus the juvenile justice and correctional systems, there are no quick and easy solutions to the problem; and

WHEREAS, the joint subcommittee has determined that because of the lack of constant vigilance, strides made in reducing the drop out rate across the Commonwealth have begun to slip; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that bold, aggressive steps be taken immediately to protect the state's investment in its most precious resource—our children, and to ensure the economic viability and competitive edge of the Commonwealth in the global marketplace; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Subcommittee Studying School Drop Out and Ways to Promote the Development of Self-esteem in Youth and Adults be continued as the Standing Subcommittee on School Dropout Prevention. The current membership of the joint subcommittee appointed pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 386 (1991) shall continue to serve. Vacancies shall be filled in the manner as authorized pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 336 (1989). The standing subcommittee shall be continued, as herein provided, for five years to January 1, 2001.

The standing subcommittee shall be authorized to hold one meeting in each of the five years to consider the issues and make any recommendations that may be necessary. During this period, the standing subcommittee shall continue to monitor the several related factors, issues, and problems cited

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by the joint subcommittee during the final year of its study, including the effect of family violence, dysfunction, and economic exigency on school attendance and school completion rates. If determined necessary and appropriate, the standing subcommittee may also report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly in accordance with the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support to the standing subcommittee. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the standing subcommittee, upon request.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$12,750.

Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint Rules Committee. The Committee may withhold expenditures or delay the period for the conduct of the study.