

1996 SESSION

ENROLLED

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 97

Requesting the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services to study the effects of recent state employment reduction programs on the services within the mental health institutions.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 13, 1996
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 23, 1996

WHEREAS, in Virginia, the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services operates many institutions for the inpatient treatment of mentally ill patients and the inpatient care of other patients; and

WHEREAS, these institutions are scattered across the state, some in municipalities and others in sparsely populated rural areas; and

WHEREAS, these institutions not only provide the much-needed care for seriously ill patients, they are also, in some communities, a major source of revenue and income for the citizens of the area; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth has a responsibility to ensure that the quality of the care provided to the patients is good and, because providing care to the mentally ill requires patient and committed professionals and other staff, the quality of the care could be directly related to the quality of the work environment; and

WHEREAS, in the last several years, Virginia has implemented several programs designed to reduce the number of state employees; and

WHEREAS, although downsizing is surely a worthwhile goal, the toll in human disruption and displacement can be great; and

WHEREAS, when the anxieties experienced by state personnel are added to the stress of a taxing job, the result could very well be a reduced quality of care that is directly proportional to the reduced morale of the employees; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substances Abuse Services be requested to study the effects of recent state employment reduction programs on the services within the mental health institutions, with particular emphasis on the impact of these efforts on rural mental health hospitals such as Southwestern Virginia Mental Health Institute. In its study, the Department shall evaluate the savings gained by reductions in force in relationship to the need to rehire essential personnel and whether the new employees are being hired at the same, lower, or higher salaries than the retired or resigned employees that they are replacing. The Department shall also examine the morale of its rural employees to ascertain the need to upgrade and revise its policies in order to improve the quality of the work environment and, thereby, the quality of the care. Finally, the Department shall examine its salary scales to ascertain any need to upgrade the salaries of long-term employees who were hired at much lower salaries than the entry level salaries of today and whether the salaries of these long-term employees are not being overtaken and surpassed by those of new employees with the same or comparable credentials.

The Department shall provide staff support for the study. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department, upon request.

The Department 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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