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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 500

Offered January 16, 1997

Continuing the Commission on Educational Infrastructure.

Patrons—Diamonstein, Abbitt, Almand, Baker, Bloxom, Brickley, Christian, Crittenden, Croshaw, Davies, Dillard, Griffith, Hall, Hamilton, Heilig, Jackson, Johnson, Landes, McClure, McDonnell, Melvin, Mims, Morgan, Moss, O'Brien, Parrish, Plum, Robinson, Ruff, Sherwood, Thomas, Van Yahres, Wagner, Watts and Woodrum

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the Commission on Educational infrastructure was established pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 135 of 1996 to examine the many difficult issues relating to school construction and educational technology infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has received much data during the 1996 interim concerning the need for funds to remedy school building conditions and thereby to improve the achievement of higher standards; and

WHEREAS, localities are estimating school construction investments of \$4.1 billion in the next five years that will remedy less than two-thirds of the known construction deficiencies of \$6.2 billion; and

WHEREAS, in many school divisions, maintenance needs are deferred—a practice that increases the costs of repairs and interacts with other issues; for example, without air conditioning, a school division cannot conduct summer school; and

WHEREAS, school construction issues are exacerbated by increases in school construction costs in recent years and by the large percentage of many school divisions' budgets that must be dedicated to debt services; and

WHEREAS, the Commission also reviewed the Board of Education's revised Six-Year Plan for Educational Technology which sets out goals and implementation strategies to equalize access to educational technology; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has examined various mechanisms for increasing funding of educational technology and the Commonwealth's commitment to this important program; and

WHEREAS, the Commission's 1997 initiatives will provide some steps to assist school divisions with construction and technology issues; and

WHEREAS, although the Commission is committed to making a difference, the scope of the problem is such that additional consideration of the issues and possible ways to remedy the problems are necessary; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Commission on Educational Infrastructure be continued. In accordance with HJR 135 of 1996, the members of the Commission so appointed shall continue to serve and any vacancies shall be filled as provided therein. In order to provide equal representation between the two chambers of the General Assembly, the leadership of the Commission shall be rotated, with the chairman becoming the vice-chairman and the vice-chairman becoming the chairman. In its 1997 study, the Commission shall continue to examine the objectives established in HJR 135 of 1996. In addition, the Commission shall request the Senate Committee on Finance and the House Committee on Appropriations to work with it to evaluate (i) the feasibility of a one-time direct appropriation for school construction; (ii) a possible debt service funding program; and (iii) ways to enhance the Commonwealth's commitment to educational technology funding.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$7,350.

The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. The staffs of the Senate Committee on Finance and the House Committee on Appropriations shall provide technical assistance to the Commission. The Commission may also seek the assistance of public and private organizations, business and industry, and such other persons with expertise in school construction, financing, and technology planning, who shall serve in an advisory and voluntary capacity without compensation.

The Commission shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1998 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

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.

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