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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 659**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE**

(Proposed by the House Committee on Education

on January 31, 1997)

(Patrons Prior to Substitute—Albo and O'Brien [HJR 603])

Requesting the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to study the demand for computer scientists, engineers, and other technologically skilled workers in Virginia industry.

WHEREAS, proficiency in Internet research, electronic mail, word processing, and database and spreadsheet programs is a prerequisite to becoming a technology-literate employee in the twenty-first century; and

WHEREAS, the growth of technology-based businesses has been a driving force in the growth of the Commonwealth's economy over the past decade, as particularly illustrated in Northern Virginia, where the Northern Virginia Technology Council estimates that there are now more than 1,600 high technology companies employing some 170,000 workers who earn an average of more than \$40,000 annually, collectively contributing more than \$7 billion in wages each year to that region's economy; and

WHEREAS, while economists have projected the creation of thousands of new high-technology jobs, data indicate that there are many job vacancies currently existing in computer science, engineering and other related fields, prompting employers to go outside Virginia and even overseas to acquire trained personnel; and

WHEREAS, while Virginia's high-technology companies recruit employees from around the nation, it is difficult for such companies to compete with companies based in other technology-intensive locations such as California's Silicon Valley; Boston, Massachusetts; and Austin, Texas; and

WHEREAS, only 2,124 of the 24,000 students who graduated with bachelor's degrees from Virginia's colleges and universities in 1996 finished with computer science or engineering degrees; and

WHEREAS, the gap between marketplace demand for high technology workers and the available supply is threatening to stall the Commonwealth's pursuit of a vibrant economic expansion; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth lacks a framework for state-level policy and planning related to the role of the public schools and institutions of higher education in developing skills needed in the high-technology work force to ensure Virginia's long-term leadership in an economy based on technological knowledge; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia be requested to study the demand for computer scientists, engineers, and other technologically skilled workers in Virginia industry. In pursuing its study, the State Council shall assess employment needs for these technologically skilled workers in Virginia industry and shall review and propose actions the Commonwealth, institutions of higher education, and the private sector might take to increase the number of enrollments and graduates in programs leading to technological competence, including computer science, engineering, and other related fields.

The State Council shall consult with state-supported and independent colleges and universities in the Commonwealth, the Center for Innovative Technology, the Department of Education, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, and the Northern Virginia Technology Council.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the State Council for this study, upon request.

The State Council shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Joint Subcommittee on Science and Technology, established pursuant to House Joint Resolution 195 (1996), or a successor joint subcommittee or entity thereof, and to the Governor and the General Assembly by November 15, 1997, as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.