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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 667**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE**

(Proposed by the House Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions
on February 1, 1997)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Cunningham)

Encouraging the Departments of Corrections, Education, Social Services, Health, Juvenile Justice, Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services, Medical Assistance Services, and Correctional Education to focus on and emphasize the benefits of prevention and intervention in state programs and in services to their respective clients.

WHEREAS, the Joint Subcommittee Studying the Status and Needs of African-American Males in Virginia, pursuant to House Joint Resolution 167 (1996) was established to identify and examine the factors and barriers which impede the welfare and development of African-American males; and

WHEREAS, the joint subcommittee examined the status and needs of such persons in education, employment, the correctional system, health, and society, giving particular attention during the first phase of its study to education, employment and economics, and the correctional system and violence; and

WHEREAS, information provided the joint subcommittee and the testimony of experts in the aforementioned fields indicate that African-American males are disadvantaged in the areas of education, employment, and economics; and

WHEREAS, data suggests a correlation between low high school graduation and college admission and retention rates, high unemployment rates, and the disproportionately high representation of African-American males in Virginia's correctional system; and

WHEREAS, the criminal justice system today emphasizes punishment and longer prison sentences over prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, statistics establish that the overwhelming percentage of adult and juvenile offenders in Virginia's correctional system have not completed high school, do not have marketable skills or trades which will enable them to secure employment upon their release from prison, and often have health conditions which require professional counseling, intervention, and treatment; and

WHEREAS, many former offenders recidivate due to their inability to re-assimilate into society through gainful employment because of poor education, a lack of job skills, and persistent, untreated physical and mental health conditions; and

WHEREAS, often factors which contribute to the incarceration of many persons, particularly among African-American males, are preventable and amenable to appropriate intervention and treatment, but become intractable and unresponsive to remediation without proper and deliberate attention; and

WHEREAS, failure to respond constructively to address these issues and to provide opportunities to facilitate the rehabilitation of offenders, where possible, while the inmates are incarcerated results in mounting costs to the Commonwealth to provide increased probation and parole services, expensive public assistance services for offenders and their families, and debt for prison construction; and

WHEREAS, emphasis on punishment and detention, and the failure to address the aforementioned concerns significantly impact disadvantaged persons who are incarcerated, especially African-American males; and

WHEREAS, failure to address these problems and conditions also tragically ends in the waste of human minds and potential benefits and contributions therefrom to the Commonwealth and society at a cost to society and to taxpayers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Departments of Corrections, Education, Social Services, Health, Juvenile Justice, Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services, Medical Assistance Services, and Correctional Education be encouraged to focus on and emphasize the benefits of prevention and intervention in state programs and in services to their respective clients; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution to the Secretaries of Public Safety, Education, and Health and Human Resources, requesting that they further disseminate copies of this resolution to the heads of state agencies so named, and other relevant senior staff members within their respective secretariats, in order that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly in this matter.

HOUSE SUBSTITUTE

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