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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 353
AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Rules
on January 28, 1997)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Maxwell)

Directing the Disability Commission to study physical access to public buildings by disabled persons.

WHEREAS, over 43 million Americans are affected by physical and sensory disabilities, including blindness, deafness, paralysis, muscular and nerve impairment, respiratory affliction, and speech and brain disorders; and

WHEREAS, Congress, through passage of the American Disabilities Act, P. L. 101-336, has established a national policy that disabled citizens shall be afforded the assistance that they require to fully participate in every area of society; and

WHEREAS, the American Disabilities Act gives civil rights protection to persons with disabilities, prohibits discrimination against such persons, and requires that barriers which affect their access to employment and to public accommodations and services be removed; and

WHEREAS, among the barriers to be removed are those which impede the physical access of such persons to both new and existing facilities; and

WHEREAS, employers, businesses, and public agencies are required to comply with the American Disabilities Act to ensure persons with disabilities full access to and participation in public accommodations and services; and

WHEREAS, barriers to employment, transportation, public accommodations, public services, and telecommunications have, by undermining the efforts to educate, rehabilitate, and employ persons with disabilities, imposed staggering economic and social costs on society; and

WHEREAS, the removal of such barriers, particularly physical barriers which impede access to public buildings, facilities, services, and accommodations, will enable society to benefit from the skills and talents of disabled persons, and will enable disabled persons to lead fuller, more productive lives; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Disability Commission be directed to study the physical access to public buildings by disabled persons.

The Commission shall (i) review the requirements of current federal and state laws relative to the rights of persons with disabilities; (ii) determine the extent to which state and local government buildings and facilities are in compliance with such laws; (iii) determine ways to improve and enhance access to public accommodations and services; (iv) consider such other related issues as may be necessary to address the needs of disabled persons in accessing public buildings, accommodations, and services; and (v) offer such recommendations as the Commission may deem necessary and appropriate.

Technical assistance shall be provided by the Departments of Housing and Community Development, Rehabilitative Services, and Rights of Virginians with Disabilities. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Commission, upon request.

The Disability 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.