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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 157

Offered January 26, 1998

Expressing the sense of the General Assembly on drug courts and the need for substance abuse services for offenders.

Patrons—Hall, Bloxom, Christian and Thomas; Senators: Gartlan and Martin

Referred to Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions

WHEREAS, an estimated 60 to 85 percent of Virginia's criminal justice population has a substance abuse problem; and

WHEREAS, research shows that offenders who receive treatment and follow-up services for substance abuse problems are less likely to re-offend than those who do not receive treatment; and

WHEREAS, research also demonstrates that the effectiveness of treatment is undiminished when the criminal justice system coerces offenders into treatment prior to sentencing or as a post-conviction condition of probation and parole; and

WHEREAS, the number of drug commitments to Virginia's prisons continues to grow at alarming rates; and

WHEREAS, the current need for substance abuse services for offenders exceeds available resources; and

WHEREAS, the cost of treating offenders with substance abuse problems is less than half the cost of incarceration for one year; and

WHEREAS, in a recent study, the Virginia State Crime Commission recommended a system of identifying persons with substance abuse problems during the sentencing phase and integrating substance abuse treatment with criminal punishment; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia State Crime Commission also recommended funding for a drug court grant program to support the number of local courts which may be interested in establishing drug courts at either the general district, circuit, or juvenile court level; and

WHEREAS, the recidivism rate of persons participating in drug courts is substantially lower than the comparison groups; and

WHEREAS, a recent California Drug and Alcohol Treatment Assessment study indicated that the cost of treating offenders was a fraction of the cost of crime resulting from non-treatment, and that the level of criminal activity declined by two-thirds from pre-treatment to post-treatment; and

WHEREAS, there is a growing need for more local jail treatment programs, community residential treatment for juveniles and adults, and aftercare and transition services for offenders and their families to begin to meet the demand for these services and to reduce the cost of incarcerating substance abusing offenders in state prisons; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That it is the sense of the General Assembly that additional resources should be made available for substance abuse services for offenders and their families and that support should be provided to local efforts to establish drug courts; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit copies of this resolution to the Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services, the Directors of the Departments of Corrections, Juvenile Justice, and Criminal Justice Services, and the Sentencing Commission in order that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly in this matter.

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