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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 189

Offered January 26, 1998

Continuing the Joint Subcommittee Studying the Status and Needs of African-American Males in Virginia.

Patrons—Maxwell, Edwards, Lambert, Lucas, Miller, Y.B. and Reasor; Delegates: Christian, Crittenden, Darner, Jones, J.C., McEachin and Melvin

Referred to the Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, House Joint Resolution No. 167 (1996) established a joint subcommittee to study the status and needs of African-American males in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, House Joint Resolution No. 570 (1997) continued the study to allow the joint subcommittee to continue its comprehensive examination of the economic, educational, and social plight of African-American males in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, African-American males face seemingly insurmountable odds such as illiteracy, substance abuse, single-parent households, child abuse and neglect, crime, sexually transmitted diseases, inadequate health care, gang-related violence, poor education, under-employment and chronic unemployment, low self-esteem, and suicide; and

WHEREAS, homicide is the leading cause of death among African-American males between the ages of 15 and 24 years, and every 18 minutes an African-American child is arrested for a drug offense; and

WHEREAS, at year-end 1995, an estimated 3.2 percent of all African-American males in the United States were in prison, as compared to less than one half of one percent for white males, making them seven times more likely to be in prison; and

WHEREAS, in 1996, 96.5 percent of the juveniles sentenced as serious offenders were male; and 70 percent were African-American; and

WHEREAS, total enrollment in higher education increased in the 1980s by 12 percent, but enrollment of African-American males decreased by 7.2 percent; and

WHEREAS, unemployment remains a way of life for many neighborhoods, and 9.7 million or 28.4 percent of all African-Americans lived below the poverty level in 1996; and

WHEREAS, compared to the total population, African-American males have a 68 percent higher death rate from heart disease, a 90 percent higher stroke rate, a 71 percent higher cancer rate, and an 86 percent higher diabetes rate; and

WHEREAS, 82 percent of Virginia's prison population consists of high school dropouts, and 64 percent of that population is African-American males; and

WHEREAS, educational achievement among African-American students continues to lag behind white and other racial and ethnic groups; and

WHEREAS, African-Americans, particularly males, are more likely to be suspended, expelled, or identified for special education programs; and

WHEREAS, the welfare and development of African-American males need the immediate and aggressive attention to ameliorate a problem of such epidemic proportions; and

WHEREAS, the joint subcommittee has worked diligently to identify and address the factors and barriers which impede the welfare and development of African-American males; but, because the issues and problems are complex, profound, and pervasive, more time is needed in order that the joint subcommittee might complete its work; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Joint Subcommittee Studying the Status and Needs of African-American Males in Virginia be continued. The members duly appointed pursuant to HJR 167 (1996) shall continue to serve, and any vacancies shall be filled as provided in the enabling resolution.

The joint subcommittee shall continue its examination of the issues and objectives enumerated in HJR 167 (1996) and HJR 570 (1997), consider such other issues related to its charge which it may deem necessary, and recommend appropriate and feasible alternatives designed to address, facilitate, promote, and assist African-American males in Virginia in reaching their fullest potential.

The joint subcommittee may continue its consultation with persons with expertise in psychiatry, the health care delivery system, social services, corrections, public and higher education, economic development, criminology, job training, community development, substance abuse prevention and treatment, family violence prevention, counseling, the religious community, and such other persons who may assist the joint subcommittee in the furtherance of its work, all of whom shall serve in a voluntary and advisory capacity to the joint subcommittee.

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60 The Division of Legislative Services shall continue to provide staff support for the study. All
61 agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee, upon request.

62 The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$9,100. An estimated \$1,000 is allocated for materials
63 and resources for the joint subcommittee. Such expenses shall be funded from the operational budget of
64 the Clerk of the House of Delegates.

65 The joint subcommittee shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations
66 to the Governor and the 1999 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the
67 Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

68 Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint
69 Rules Committee. The Committee may withhold expenditures or delay the period for the conduct of the
70 study.