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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 537

Offered January 14, 1999

Establishing a joint subcommittee to study educational, daycare, social services, and parenting programs and initiatives designed to stimulate and enhance early childhood brain development and learning.

 Patrons—Wilkins and Darner

 Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, increasing volumes of research indicate the critical nature of the earliest years of life in brain development, and that the "sights, sounds, touches and interactions experienced in the first three years of life will dictate how a child will grow up and function as an adult"; and

WHEREAS, some educators and policymakers contend that these revolutionary findings "must have a profound impact on how, what, and when we teach and on our entire body of public policy affecting infants, children, and families"; and

WHEREAS, research indicates that the repeated use of the neural connections in the first years of life enhances brain development and function, and many children may not be receiving the care and stimulation in daycare, educational, or other environments that will best promote opportunities for growth and development; and

WHEREAS, developmental initiatives such as the Missouri Parents as Teachers program, employing personal visits, group meetings, developmental screenings, and local centers to assist parents in learning the most effective ways to stimulate child development, have been duplicated across the country and may prove a valuable model worthy of exploration in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, while the Commonwealth has long recognized the crucial importance of effective early childhood development opportunities, examination of other states' initiatives, such as Oregon's Healthy Start and Vermont's Success by Six, may prove helpful in enhancing or expanding the Commonwealth's ongoing efforts to support early learning; and

WHEREAS, appropriately and effectively integrating these recent scientific findings into public policy necessitates careful consideration of a variety of educational, financial, and policy issues; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study educational, daycare, social services, and parenting programs and initiatives designed to stimulate and enhance early childhood brain development and learning. The joint subcommittee shall examine, among other things, current early childhood educational and developmental initiatives in the Virginia; recent brain development research and its impact on public policy development in other states; specific initiatives such as those in Missouri, Oregon, and Vermont; and such other issues as the joint subcommittee deems appropriate.

The joint subcommittee shall consist of nine members as follows: five members of the House of Delegates, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House, and four members of the Senate, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$ 5,400.

The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee, upon request. The joint subcommittee shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 2000 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for processing legislative documents.

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

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