

1999 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 644

Directing the Joint Commission on Health Care, in cooperation with the State Department of Health, the Department of Medical Assistance Services, the Virginia Dental Association, the Virginia Dental Hygienists' Association, the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry, the Virginia Board of Dentistry, the Virginia Association of Free Clinics, and the Virginia Health Care Foundation, to study ways to increase access to dental care throughout the Commonwealth.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 4, 1999

Agreed to by the Senate, February 18, 1999

WHEREAS, a 1996 survey of the insurance status of Virginians found that approximately 13 percent, or 858,000 persons, are uninsured; and

WHEREAS, research has shown that uninsured persons are half as likely as insured individuals to visit a dentist regularly; and

WHEREAS, the 1996 Health Access Survey sponsored by the Virginia Health Care Foundation found that less than one-half of all Virginia households used dental insurance to pay for at least part of their dental care; and

WHEREAS, the 1996 Health Access Survey also found that 11 percent of survey respondents had not seen a dentist in over four years, and six percent reported they had never seen a dentist; and

WHEREAS, the lack of preventive and other dental care often can lead to serious, costly health conditions; and

WHEREAS, a recent report by the Division of Dental Health within the State Department of Health noted that there are dental care shortage areas in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, there is limited data regarding the number and location of practicing dentists throughout the Commonwealth, which hampers dental workforce planning efforts; and

WHEREAS, a significant shortage of dentists participating in the Medicaid program adversely affects the dental health services available to Medicaid recipients; and

WHEREAS, the cost of tuition for dental school has risen significantly in recent years, causing an adverse impact on the recruitment of dental students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, concern has been raised regarding the adequacy of the number and dollar amount of dental scholarships currently available to dental students; and

WHEREAS, a comprehensive study of various issues regarding access to dental care in Virginia is needed to ensure that the greatest number of Virginians receive quality dental care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Commission on Health Care, in cooperation with the State Department of Health, the Department of Medical Assistance Services, the Virginia Dental Association, the Virginia Dental Hygienists' Association, the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry, the Virginia Board of Dentistry, the Virginia Association of Free Clinics, and the Virginia Health Care Foundation, be directed to study ways to increase access to dental care throughout the Commonwealth. The study shall include, but not be limited to, an analysis of: (i) the need for practitioner data for dental workforce planning purposes; (ii) the financial, structural and other barriers to accessing dental care throughout the Commonwealth; (iii) dental practitioner shortage areas and ways to increase the number of dentists practicing in these shortage areas; (iv) the number of dentists participating in the Medicaid program and actions that would increase the number of participating dentists; (v) the current dental scholarship program and potential revisions to the program that may increase the number of dentists establishing practices in underserved areas; (vi) the actions taken in other states to increase access to dental care and to increase the number of dentists participating in Medicaid and practicing in underserved areas; and (vii) other appropriate issues which will increase access to dental care.

The Joint Commission shall 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 the processing of legislative documents.

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