

1999 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 647

Requesting the State Health Commissioner to establish a task force to review and examine health-related data sets as part of further analysis of the health status of African Americans.

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

Agreed to by the Senate, February 18, 1999

WHEREAS, the State Department of Health's Office of Minority Health recently completed a study of the health status and conditions of African Americans pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution No. 355 (1997); and

WHEREAS, based on available health data, there are a number of significant disparities in the health status and conditions of African Americans and Caucasians, including life expectancy, heart disease mortality, stroke mortality, diabetes, infant mortality, low birth weight, and teenage pregnancy; and

WHEREAS, heart disease, cancer, stroke, unintentional and intentional injury, and HIV/AIDS are among the most significant health concerns for African Americans; and

WHEREAS, 20 percent of African Americans lack health insurance compared to 14 percent of all Virginians; and

WHEREAS, the Department study concluded that Virginians as a whole are generally making progress towards the Healthy People 2000 objectives but that in most cases these objectives will not be achieved by African Americans; and

WHEREAS, the Department study concluded that there is no consistent method for determining the extent to which health promotion activities target African Americans and whether those activities that do so are effective; and

WHEREAS, the adequate portrayal of the distinct health outcomes of African Americans is difficult because much of the state's health data is not collected or reported by racial classifications; and

WHEREAS, state health data has historically been collected under the race categories of "White" and "non-White," with "non-White" including African Americans as well as other racial and ethnic groups; and

WHEREAS, the Department study concluded that disaggregation of these health data by racial and ethnic population groups is critical if a true picture of African-American health, and the health of other minority groups, is to be accurately portrayed; and

WHEREAS, the Department study also concluded that further analysis is needed to develop a more accurate depiction of efforts to reduce health disparities between African Americans and Caucasians, and to establish a baseline for analyzing and evaluating health data and health promotion activities; and

WHEREAS, the Department study recommended that a methodology be developed for estimating the state's population by race, geographic area, and gender in order to allow for a uniform method of analyzing health data sets; and

WHEREAS, the Department study further recommended establishment of a task force to focus on African-American health in Virginia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the State Health Commissioner be requested to establish a task force comprised of representatives of appropriate state agencies and private health-related entities to (i) review and examine health-related data sets in Virginia as part of further analysis of the health status of African Americans, (ii) develop reporting processes to generate more reliable estimates of minority populations, and (iii) examine how state agencies and private health organizations can assist by collecting and reporting data classified by race and ethnicity.

The Commissioner shall submit the findings and recommendations of the task force to the State Board of Health and the Joint Commission on Health Care by October 1, 1999, and 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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