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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 648

Offered January 21, 1999

Requesting the Virginia Department of Health to co-sponsor a forum with other public and private sector organizations on African-American health care access issues.

Patrons—Melvin, Baker, Brink, Davies, DeBoer, Diamonstein, Hall, Hamilton and Morgan; Senators: Bolling, Gartlan, Lambert, Schrock, Walker and Woods

Referred to Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Health's Office of Minority Health recently completed a study of the health status and conditions of African-Americans (the VDH study) pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution 355 of the 1997 Session of the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, based on available health data, there are a number of significant disparities in the health status and conditions of African-Americans and Whites, 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 VDH study concluded that Virginians as a whole are generally making progress towards the Healthy People 2000 objectives established by the United States Department of Health and Human Services but that, in most cases, these objectives will not be achieved for African-Americans; and

WHEREAS, the VDH study also 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 VDH study further concluded that eliminating the health disparities currently faced by African-Americans would benefit the Commonwealth economically by increasing the number of people who are fit to work and thereby contribute to Virginia's productivity and competitiveness; and

WHEREAS, the VDH study also proposed additional discussion of strategies to strengthen the African-American family through improvements in access to health care and improvements in behaviors; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia Department of Health be requested to develop a public/private partnership with appropriate state and local government agencies and private health-related organizations to co-sponsor a forum or congress on African-American health service access issues. The forum or congress shall address topics such as (i) providing care to African-Americans in public and private settings, (ii) developing strategies to enroll African-Americans in private and public health insurance programs, (iii) recruiting and retaining African-American physicians in Virginia, (iv) developing culturally competent health care services, (v) managed care, (vi) public/private partnerships that increase access to care for African-Americans, and (vii) identifying key health issues related to African-American families; and be it

RESOLVED FURTHER That the State Health Commissioner report the results and recommendations of the forum or congress on African-American health care access to the State Board of Health and the Joint Commission on Health Care by September 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.

INTRODUCED

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