

1999 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 729

Directing the Joint Commission on Health Care to study the incidence, prevalence, and impact of asthma on the Commonwealth's citizens.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 7, 1999

Agreed to by the Senate, February 18, 1999

WHEREAS, asthma, a chronic respiratory disease which affects more than 14.6 million Americans, results in inflammation of the airways and can be triggered by various stimuli; and

WHEREAS, asthma affects an estimated 214,000 adults and 113,000 children in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, national statistics indicate that the prevalence of asthma has increased from 34.8 per thousand persons to 56.1 per thousand persons, which is a dramatic 61.2 percent increase in the incidence rate in the United States; and

WHEREAS, among children, asthma is the most common chronic illness and is responsible for 10 million days of school absenteeism annually; and

WHEREAS, asthma accounts for one in six of all pediatric emergency visits in the United States, with the estimated rate for emergency room visits among children under age five at 120.7 per 100,000, which is the highest rate of all age groups; and

WHEREAS, an estimated three million work days of people over 18 years of age are lost annually as a result of asthma; and

WHEREAS, asthma deaths have increased nationally in the last 17 years by 117 percent, from 2,598 in 1979 to 5,637 in 1995; and

WHEREAS, among African Americans, the asthma age-adjusted death rate was 3.8 per 100,000 in 1995, three times higher than the 1.3 per 100,000 rate for the Caucasian population; and

WHEREAS, the annual direct health care costs of asthma are approximately \$7.5 billion and indirect costs, such as lost productivity resulting from asthma, are \$3.8 billion, for a total of \$11.3 billion per year in costs attributed to asthma; and

WHEREAS, 511,000 Americans were hospitalized for asthma treatment in 1995, representing an increase of 284 percent in hospitalizations for asthma treatment since 1979; and

WHEREAS, studies suggest that asthma can be controlled and managed with the proper patient education and prescribed medications; and

WHEREAS, asthma is a chronic respiratory illness which has enormous public health significance to the people of the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Commission on Health Care be directed to study the incidence, prevalence, and impact of asthma on the Commonwealth's citizens. The Joint Commission shall evaluate, in the course of its study, the growing incidence and prevalence of asthma; the disease's adverse impact on African Americans and other minority populations; the health costs associated with the treatment and management of asthma; the need for comprehensive asthma education programs for individuals, parents, and the medical and health care community; barriers to patient access to asthma medical care, including any recently developed medications; factors that may cause increases in asthma incidence, symptoms, and episodes in Virginia and the relative importance of such factors; and the need for an asthma public awareness campaign supported by the State Department of Health. Particular attention shall be paid to the impact of asthma on Virginia's children and ways to educate parents, teachers, physicians, and children in the management of childhood asthma.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Commission, upon request. In addition, the Joint Commission may seek input from experts, private organizations, and the citizens of the Commonwealth as it deems appropriate.

The Joint Commission 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 the processing of legislative documents.

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