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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 420

Offered January 21, 1999

Continuing the Joint Subcommittee Studying the Status and Needs of African-American Males in Virginia.

Patrons—Maxwell, Barry, Edwards, Lambert, Lucas, Marsh, Miller, Y.B. and Williams; Delegates: Albo, Barlow, Baskerville, Christian, Crittenden, Darner, Diamonstein, Hamilton, Jones, D.C., Jones, J.C., McEachin, Melvin and Robinson

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, House Joint Resolution No. 167 (1996) established a joint subcommittee to study the status and needs of African-American males in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, House Joint Resolution No. 570 (1997) continued the study to allow the joint subcommittee to continue its comprehensive examination of the economic, educational, and social plight of African-American males in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Senate Joint Resolution No. 189 (1998) continued the study to allow the joint subcommittee to examine health, economic development, criminal justice and social issues facing African-American males in Virginia, and to plan, sponsor, and conduct the very successful statewide legislative conference, "Justice Without Race: Building a New Consensus," as required pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution No. 88 (1998); and

WHEREAS, African-American males face what frequently seem to be insurmountable odds in areas such as substance abuse, inadequate health care, inadequate mental health care, gang-related violence, single-parent households, economic deprivation, poor education, chronic unemployment, underemployment, suicide, incarceration, overrepresentation in special education programs, and illiteracy; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Health reports that African-American males have higher rates of mortality from heart disease, cancer, cerebrovascular disease, unintentional injuries, and HIV infection; and

WHEREAS, in Virginia, there is an overrepresentation of African-American males in adult correctional facilities and the juvenile justice system; and

WHEREAS, evidence suggests that African-American males receive harsher punishment at every level of the criminal justice system at the local, state, and federal levels; and

WHEREAS, African-Americans aged 16 and over comprise 17.7 percent of Virginia's population and reflect an unemployment rate of 8.9 percent according to the 1990 census, while whites aged 16 and over represent 78.7 percent of the population but experience an unemployment rate of only 3.5 percent; and

WHEREAS, the welfare and development of African-American males needs continued and immediate attention to ameliorate problems of such epidemic proportions; and

WHEREAS, the Joint Subcommittee Studying the Status and Needs of African-American Males in Virginia has diligently and aggressively acted to analyze, evaluate, and recommend appropriate and feasible alternatives to problems facing the Commonwealth's African-American male population, but has been impeded in some areas by a myriad of issues entrenched in tangential and complex social, economic, and political problems; and

WHEREAS, the joint subcommittee has recommended the creation of the Council on Minority Affairs, a legislative agency, to identify the needs of Virginia's minority populations and develop a strategic plan for the overall implementation of recommendations and legislative initiatives designed to address their needs and promote greater inclusion of such persons into mainstream society; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Joint Subcommittee Studying the Status and Needs of African-American Males in Virginia be continued. The members duly appointed pursuant to HJR No. 167 (1996) shall continue to serve, and any vacancies shall be filled as provided in the enabling resolution.

The joint subcommittee shall continue its examination of the issues and objectives enumerated in HJR No. 167 (1996), HJR No. 570 (1997), and SJR No. 189 (1998); consider such other relevant issues related to its charge which it may deem necessary; and recommend appropriate and feasible alternatives designed to address, facilitate, promote, and assist African-American males in the Commonwealth in reaching their full potential.

The joint subcommittee shall also assist and advise the Council on Minority Affairs, upon its

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60 establishment, and coordinate the transition of its work to the Council at the end of the joint
61 subcommittee's term.

62 The joint subcommittee may continue its consultation with experts in psychiatry, the health care
63 delivery system, social services, corrections, public and higher education, economic development,
64 criminology, job training, community development, and substance abuse prevention and such other
65 persons who may assist the joint subcommittee in the furtherance of its work, all whom shall serve in a
66 voluntary and advisory capacity to the joint subcommittee.

67 The Division of Legislative Services shall continue to provide staff support for the study. All
68 agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee, upon request.

69 The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$9,100. An estimated \$1,000 is allocated for materials
70 and resources for the joint subcommittee. Such expenses shall be funded from the operational budget of
71 the Clerk of the House of Delegates.

72 The joint subcommittee shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations
73 to the Governor and the 2000 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the
74 Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

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