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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 130

Offered January 11, 2006

Prefiled January 11, 2006

Requesting the Department of Education to collect data and information on the high school drop out and graduation rates in the Commonwealth. Report.

Patrons—Hall and Ebbin; Senators: Lambert and Stosch

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, national leaders, state governors, and the business community have focused attention on the declining high school graduation rate, and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), Title I, Part H, established the school dropout prevention program to increase high school graduation rates; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Education estimates that every day 5,000 students drop out of school before graduation; and

WHEREAS, the National Governors Association, in its newly released report, "Graduation Counts: A Report of the NGA Task Force on State High School Graduation Data," indicated that "high school reform is at the forefront of the national and state education agendas; however, the quality of data concerning graduation and drop out rates is alarmingly poor, exceptionally difficult to track accurately, and often grossly inaccurate and misleading"; and

WHEREAS, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) analyzed the National Center on Education Statistics' data on drop out rates, and stated in its report, "Dreams Deferred: High School Dropouts in the United States," that dropouts comprise nearly half of the heads of households on welfare, and a similar percentage of the prison population"; and

WHEREAS, Focus Adolescent Services cited the following drop out statistics: (i) "students in large cities are twice as likely to leave school before graduating than non-urban youth; (ii) more than one in four Hispanic youth drop out, and nearly half leave by the eighth grade; (iii) Hispanics are twice as likely as African Americans to drop out. White and Asian American students are least likely to drop out; (iv) more than half the students who drop out leave by the tenth grade, 20% quit by the eighth grade, and 3% drop out by the fourth grade; (v) nearly 25% changed schools two or more times, with some changing for disciplinary reasons; (vi) almost 20% were held back a grade, and almost half failed a course; (vii) almost one-half missed at least 10 days of school, one-third cut class at least 10 times, and one-quarter were late at least 10 times; (viii) 8% spent time in a juvenile home or shelter; (ix) one-third were put on in-school suspension, suspended, or put on probation, and more than 15% were either expelled or told they couldn't return; and (x) 12% of dropouts ran away from home"; and

WHEREAS, in February 2005, the Educational Testing Service released its report, "One-Third of a Nation: Rising Dropout Rates and Declining Opportunities," in which it stated that one-third of students are leaving high school without a diploma, high school completion rates have not been accurately reported, and, from 1990 to 2000, the graduation rate declined in all but seven states and the rate declined by eight or more percentage points in 10 states; and

WHEREAS, the Educational Testing Service also reported that "there is a shortage of guidance counselors available to work with students at risk of dropping out and their families, the opportunity for dropouts to resume education and training is diminishing, the earning power of high school dropouts has been in almost continuous decline over the past three decades, and the United States ranks 10th in the world in high school completion rates"; and

WHEREAS, the personal and social costs of dropping out of school have increased, and the gap between dropouts and more educated people is widening as opportunities increase for higher skilled workers and all but disappear for the less skilled; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that high school dropouts will earn \$200,000 less than high school graduates, and over \$800,000 less than college graduates during their lifetimes; and

WHEREAS, truancy, health conditions, poor academic performance, substance abuse, family dysfunction, behavior problems, crime, and other sociocultural issues influence the drop out rate; and

WHEREAS, declining graduation rates present significant challenges to the stability of the nation's and the Commonwealth's social and economic global standing and ability to maintain a competitive advantage among industrialized nations; and

WHEREAS, federal agencies and nationally recognized organizations have directed states' attention to the need to address the declining graduation rate; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Education be requested to collect data and information on the high school drop out and graduation rates in the

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59 Commonwealth.

60 In collecting the data and information, the Department of Education shall (i) review its process and
61 procedures for defining, counting, and reporting school dropout statistics to determine the need for
62 revision and compliance by school divisions; (ii) ascertain for the last three years the number of students
63 who dropped out of school before the seventh grade and the reasons therefor, and the number of
64 students who graduate annually; (iii) provide data concerning whether, by whom, and the manner in
65 which students at risk of dropping out are counseled to remain in school; (iv) assemble data on the
66 retention of students at risk of dropping out and efforts to retrieve school dropouts; and (v) provide such
67 related data and information to apprise policymakers fully regarding the Commonwealth's drop out and
68 high school graduation rates.

69 Technical assistance shall be provided to the Department of Education by the Departments of Social
70 Services, Corrections, and Juvenile Justice, and the Virginia School Boards Association. All agencies of
71 the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department in collecting the information, upon
72 request.

73 The Department of Education shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an
74 executive summary and the data and information collected on school drop out and graduation rates no
75 later than the first day of the 2007 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary
76 shall be submitted for publication as a document as provided in the procedures of the Division of
77 Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be
78 posted on the General Assembly's website.