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## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 636

Offered January 10, 2007

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*Directing the Joint Commission on Health Care to study ways to improve housing opportunities for persons with mental illness. Report.*

Patrons—O'Bannon and McClellan

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth has embarked on a program of revitalization of services for persons with mental illness, consisting of expansion and diversification of community resources to allow more persons with mental disabilities to live in their communities; and

WHEREAS, the Olmstead Supreme Court decision prompted Virginia and all other states to endeavor to offer more opportunities in the community for persons with mental illness and other disabilities; and

WHEREAS, one of the most significant barriers to discharge from state facilities to communities is lack of appropriate, affordable residential opportunities; and

WHEREAS, housing costs are increasing dramatically for all Virginians, and this affects Virginians with mental illness as well; and

WHEREAS, in most areas of the Commonwealth, the amount received in disability payments and other sources of income available to Virginians with serious mental illness is less than the average cost of a one-bedroom apartment; and

WHEREAS, consumers with mental illness cite assistance to find housing as the most important service they can receive; and

WHEREAS, consumers cite poor housing as a chief reason for lack of compliance with a mutually agreed upon treatment plan; and

WHEREAS, the 2007 Virginia General Assembly has been asked to consider expanding the use of auxiliary grants to offer persons with mental illness greater residential opportunities; and

WHEREAS, if adopted, this change would make a modest improvement in the choice of residential options for Virginians with mental illness, but would not begin to solve the problem of lack of housing; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Commission on Health Care be directed to study ways to improve housing opportunities for persons with mental illness. The study shall examine the availability of safe, affordable, and appropriate residential opportunities for Virginians with mental illness and recommend ways the Commonwealth can increase these opportunities.

In conducting its study, the Joint Commission on Health Care shall consider comments from affected consumers, as well as their partners in state and local government and private providers.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Joint Commission on Health Care by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Commission on Health Care for this study, upon request.

The Joint Commission on Health Care shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2007, and the Executive Director shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the 2008 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether the Joint Commission on Health Care intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

INTRODUCED

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