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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 307

Offered January 14, 2009

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Establishing a joint subcommittee to study the effects of the economic recession on public schools and families in Virginia. Report.

Patron—Marsh

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the realities of the current economic crisis, symbolized by record home foreclosures; failed banks; panicked markets; recent high profile bankruptcies, mergers, and consolidations of American businesses; the financial bailout of Wall Street and the big three American automobile manufacturers; rising unemployment, layoffs, and downsizings; and closings of many retailers have resulted in an unprecedented decline in the standard of living for many citizens; and

WHEREAS, much has been written and reported regarding the implications of the economic crisis on the global economic system and for the future viability of the American economy; however, the effects of the economic crisis' collateral damage on children, the educational system, and families is trapped in the peripheral vision of many market analysts, social scientists, and policy makers; and

WHEREAS, the strain of the continuing economic crisis has decimated family wages, creating financial hardships, interrupted college educations, breakdowns in family relationships, and many homeless families and children; and

WHEREAS, many children are frightened and bereft of hope, stability, dignity, and security, leaving distressed parents and extended family members oblivious as to how to help them endure a variety of consequences that children generally do not have to face; and

WHEREAS, many of these children are school age, and due to the foreclosure of their homes, their lives have been disrupted and they are forced to move away from friends, family, and their schools; and

WHEREAS, the stress and burdens that they bring with them to the classroom alter the positive school ambience and impede concentration and learning, and public schools have experienced an increase in the number of homeless students and those qualifying for the Free and Reduced Lunch program; and

WHEREAS, with budgets already strained to meet educational mandates and impending reductions in funding, public schools must continue to provide quality education and related support services while being fiscally impacted by the growing number of homeless students and challenged to meet the benchmarks for student achievement required by federal and state laws; and

WHEREAS, given the bleak economic outlook, the trickle-down effects of the economic crisis on children, families, and public schools will likely continue in the foreseeable future and efforts to minimize the burdens on public schools, reassure our children, and preserve families must be a priority; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study the effects of the economic recession on public schools and families in Virginia. The joint subcommittee shall have a total membership of six members that shall consist of six legislative members to be appointed as follows: two members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules, and four members of the House of Delegates to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates in accordance with the principles of proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates. The joint subcommittee shall elect a chairman and vice chairman from among its membership, who shall be members of the General Assembly.

In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall (i) evaluate the effects of the economic crisis on public schools in Virginia; (ii) determine the number of school-age children affected by recent home foreclosures with the decline of the housing industry, unemployment of a parent, and homelessness, and, if possible, correlate these events in the lives of school children to academic performance; (iii) determine whether the economic crisis has contributed to an increase in family dysfunction, unemployment, crime, familial breakdown, divorce and separation, substance abuse, mental health problems, school and college dropout rates, and domestic violence; (iv) ascertain how and which educational programs and services have been reduced or eliminated by public schools as a result of funding reductions due to the economic crisis; (v) determine whether there has been an increase in the number of homeless students in Virginia public schools, and the fiscal and programmatic effect of such increase; (vi) determine ways to assist public schools, children, and their families in coping with the economic crisis so as to minimize adverse consequences to them and governmental agencies; and (vii) consider such other matters as the joint

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59 subcommittee deems pertinent to carrying out the objectives of the study.

60 In the course of its deliberations, the joint subcommittee shall provide opportunities for the
61 participation of professional and community organizations, the corporate and faith communities, and
62 other persons with expertise and interest in public and higher education, and the welfare of children and
63 their families.

64 Administrative staff support shall be provided by the Office of the Clerk of the Senate. Legal,
65 research, policy analysis, and other services as requested by the joint subcommittee shall be provided by
66 the Division of Legislative Services. Technical assistance shall be provided by the Departments of
67 Education, Social Services, Labor and Industry, Medical Assistance Services, Health, Mental Health,
68 Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services, the Commission on Youth, and the staffs of the
69 Senate Committee on Finance and the House Committee on Appropriations. All agencies of the
70 Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee for this study, upon request.

71 The joint subcommittee shall be limited to four meetings for the 2009 interim, and the direct costs of
72 this study shall not exceed \$6,000 without approval as set out in this resolution. Approval for
73 unbudgeted nonmember-related expenses shall require the written authorization of the chairman of the
74 joint subcommittee and the respective Clerk. If a companion joint resolution of the other chamber is
75 agreed to, written authorization of both Clerks shall be required.

76 No recommendation of the joint subcommittee shall be adopted if a majority of the Senate members
77 or a majority of the House members appointed to the joint subcommittee (i) vote against the
78 recommendation and (ii) vote for the recommendation to fail notwithstanding the majority vote of the
79 joint subcommittee.

80 The joint subcommittee shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2009, and the chairman shall
81 submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and
82 recommendations no later than the first day of the 2010 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The
83 executive summary shall state whether the joint subcommittee intends to submit to the General
84 Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or
85 Senate document. The executive summary and the report shall be submitted as provided in the
86 procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents
87 and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

88 Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint
89 Rules Committee. The Committee may approve or disapprove expenditures for this study, extend or
90 delay the period for the conduct of the study, or authorize additional meetings during the 2009 interim.