

2010 SESSION

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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 154

Offered January 14, 2010

Directing the Virginia State Crime Commission to study the costs and benefits associated with the establishment of mental health courts. Report.

Patron—Loupassi

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, mental health courts are designed to place nonviolent offenders with mental illnesses into judicially monitored treatment programs, with the goal of reducing the recidivism rate among offenders with mental illness; and

WHEREAS, diverting offenders with mental illness from local jails and state prisons may result in decreased costs for jail and prison operation, while also freeing up space for more dangerous offenders; and

WHEREAS, federal funding for the establishment of mental health courts may be available through the United States Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance; and

WHEREAS, the City of Norfolk has established a pilot mental health court which may serve as a model for mental health courts in the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia State Crime Commission be directed to study the costs and benefits associated with the establishment of mental health courts.

In conducting its study, the Virginia State Crime Commission shall assess the desirability and feasibility of mental health courts for nonviolent offenders with mental illnesses. The Commission shall, to the extent feasible, ascertain the number of offenders who would be diverted into mental health courts and the effect such diversion will have on the costs of jail and prison operation. The Commission shall determine what benefits will accrue to offenders who will be diverted into mental health courts, including any reduction in the rate of recidivism. The Commission shall consider the availability of federal funding for mental health courts in assessing the costs and benefits of establishing such courts in the Commonwealth.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Virginia State Crime Commission by the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Virginia State Crime Commission for this study, upon request.

The Virginia State Crime Commission shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2010, and the chairman 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 2011 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether the Virginia State Crime Commission 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.

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