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SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 33

Offered February 10, 2014

Directing the Senate Committee on Education and Health to study options for changing the number, frequency, or content of Standards of Learning assessments. Report.

Patron—Miller

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, elementary and secondary school students in the Commonwealth are required to take 34 criterion-referenced assessments associated with the Standards of Learning (SOL) in grades three through 11; and

WHEREAS, school accountability is an important goal of the public school system in the Commonwealth, but it must be balanced with meaningful, individualized student learning and student growth; and

WHEREAS, excessive testing and test preparation may inhibit the ability of teachers to cultivate an environment in which students are encouraged to think critically and develop a deep and nuanced understanding of the SOL subjects and course content; and

WHEREAS, the prosperity of the Commonwealth is linked to the ability of its public schools to train college-ready and career-ready high school graduates with critical thinking skills; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, That the Senate Committee on Education and Health be directed to study options for changing the number, frequency, or content of Standards of Learning assessments. Six members of the Senate Committee on Education and Health shall be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules, upon the recommendation of the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health, to a study committee. The committee shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman from among its membership. In the committee's deliberations, the Senate Committee on Education and Health may provide for the participation of the Secretary of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and one member from each of the following organizations: the Virginia School Board Association, the Virginia Association of School Superintendents, the Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals, the Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals, the Virginia Education Association, and the Virginia Parent Teacher Association.

In conducting its study, the committee shall gather information and develop recommendations on:

1. The feasibility of changing the number, frequency, or content of SOL assessments administered to public school students in grades three through 11;

2. Which SOL assessments to eliminate and which SOL assessments to continue administering;

3. When to administer SOL assessments;

4. Whether to administer SOL assessments with essay and short-answer questions rather than multiple-choice questions;

5. Whether to allow students to forgo SOL assessments if they achieve satisfactory scores on Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or other such examinations; and

6. The appropriateness of alternative assessments for students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency.

In conducting its study, the committee shall consider the number, frequency, and content of benchmark assessments and other assessments that students are required to take in addition to SOL assessments.

Administrative staff support shall be provided by the Office of the Clerk of the Senate. Legal, research, policy analysis, and other services as requested by the committee shall be provided by the Division of Legislative Services. Technical assistance shall be provided by the Department of Education, the Secretary of Education, and the local school boards. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the committee for this study, upon request.

The committee shall be limited to four meetings for this study during the 2014 interim. An estimated \$11,280 is allocated for speakers, materials, and other resources. Approval for unbudgeted nonmember-related expenses shall require the written authorization of the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health and the Clerk of the Senate.

The committee shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2014, and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health 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 2015 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether the Senate Committee on Education and Health intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its

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59 findings and recommendations for publication as a Senate document. The executive summary and report
60 shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for
61 the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's
62 website.