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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 95

Offered January 13, 2016

Directing the Commission on Youth to study the Department of Social Services' administration of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program. Report.

Patron—Favola

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, administered by the Department of Social Services (the Department), offers Virginians living in poverty the opportunity to achieve economic independence by removing barriers and disincentives to work, providing positive incentives to work, and providing opportunities and work skills necessary for self-sufficiency; and

WHEREAS, the TANF block grant funds a wide range of benefits and services for low-income families with children, primarily distributed through monthly cash payments to be used to meet such families' basic needs; and

WHEREAS, states are permitted to reserve or save unused TANF funds without a time limit, which allows for flexibility in timing the use of TANF funds and to save for unexpected occurrences that might increase costs, such as recessions or natural disasters; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth has millions of dollars in unspent TANF funds; and

WHEREAS, a comprehensive study of the Department's administration of the TANF Program and an analysis of unused TANF funds may help to stabilize, strengthen, and better serve families in need; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Commission on Youth be directed to study the Department of Social Services' administration of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program.

In conducting its study, the Commission shall (i) evaluate the Department's administration of the TANF Program and identify the amount of and reasoning for unused TANF funds; (ii) determine whether TANF funds are being used for the intended purposes of the TANF Program or whether such funds are being diverted to other programs or non-TANF purposes; (iii) determine whether and how TANF funds can be better used to stabilize families economically, help provide educational opportunities, and provide parenting classes and identify other support services that could be made available through TANF funding to strengthen families; and (iv) consult with all relevant stakeholders.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Commission for this study, upon request.

The Commission on Youth shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2016, 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 2017 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether the 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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