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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 73

Offered January 10, 2018

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Requesting the Department of Education to study bullying and suicide prevention among LGBTQ and other youth. Report.

Patrons—Carr and Roem

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the United States has long cherished its identity as a melting pot composed of individuals of different races, ethnicities, cultures, religions, and genders; and

WHEREAS, it has been a tradition of the Commonwealth to embrace and appreciate diversity and to honor the rights of all Virginians, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity; and

WHEREAS, in recent years, the United States has experienced an increase in the bullying and harassment of its LGBTQ youth based on their sexual orientations and gender identities, which has led to, among other things, heightened rates of emotional distress, depression, low self-esteem, and suicide among LGBTQ youth; and

WHEREAS, such intolerance and discrimination, based on ignorance, weakens the young people of the Commonwealth and the state as a whole; and

WHEREAS, the continued success of the United States and the Commonwealth requires acceptance of diversity among its citizens; and

WHEREAS, youth in the Commonwealth should feel safe in their communities and be able to fully participate in all activities without fear of being bullied, harassed, or intimidated because of their sexual orientation or gender identity; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth must take measures to protect its vulnerable youth population, particularly in its public schools, and to ensure that such youth receive adequate protection from bullying, harassment, discrimination, and intimidation based on their sexual orientation or gender identity; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Education be requested to study bullying and suicide prevention among LGBTQ and other youth.

In conducting its study, the Department of Education shall (i) assess the effectiveness of current suicide prevention strategies and anti-bullying policies and codes of student conduct among school divisions, including bullying by electronic means; (ii) identify areas for improvement among such strategies, policies, and codes of conduct; (iii) determine the suicide rate of youth in the Commonwealth and identify the percentage of LGBTQ youth in such rate; and (iv) recommend strategies, policies, and programs that can be used to decrease and prevent bullying, harassment, discrimination, and intimidation of LGBTQ and other youth, and the rate of suicide resulting therefrom, in the Commonwealth's public schools.

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

The Department of Education shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2018, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and 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 no later than the first day of the 2019 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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