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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 490

Offered January 19, 1995

Requesting the State Crime Commission to study the staffing patterns in Virginia's correctional institutions, the classification of correctional officers and other institutional support staff, the employee turnover rate, the impact of an increasing prison population on staffing patterns, and the issue of staff safety in relation to this increasing prison population, and to develop recommendations for the General Assembly to consider to ameliorate the problems.

Patrons—Woodrum, Almand, Ball, Copeland, Cunningham and Guest; Senator: Robb

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the population in Virginia's correctional institutions has risen approximately 63 percent in the past five years while the staff has not been increased at an equivalent rate; and

WHEREAS, most of Virginia's correctional institutions are filled beyond their rated capacity due to the practice of "double-bunking" and "double-celling" to meet the demand for inmate beds; and

WHEREAS, an increased prison population has brought about an increased need for services within Virginia's prisons in the following areas: security, prison support services, work and educational activities, health care services, and treatment personnel; and

WHEREAS, the increased population with its resulting increased burden on the system has forced the utilization of overtime to meet the additional security demands of the system; and

WHEREAS, recent legislative changes will further increase the demand for prison beds and additional correctional staff; and

WHEREAS, though the work environment for correctional staff is very demanding and stressful, the salary levels remain relatively low, creating a high personnel turnover and incidents of officer stress; and

WHEREAS, correctional officers received a classification upgrade effective July 1, 1995, yet the professional status of correctional institution rehabilitation counselors, who provide case management services to inmates, remains static, and their salaries are not commensurate with that of their peers who work in other state agencies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, that the State Crime Commission be directed to study the staffing patterns of Virginia's correctional institutions, the classification of correctional institution rehabilitation and other support staff, the employee turnover rate, and the security needs of the staff at each institution, and to develop appropriate recommendations and funding proposals to implement such recommendations.

The Crime Commission shall receive technical assistance from the appropriate criminal justice agencies, particularly the Departments of Corrections and of Correctional Education, as well as from the staffs of the House Appropriations Committee and Senate Finance Committee.

The Crime Commission shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1996 General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for processing documents.

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