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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 52

Offered January 12, 2022

Prefiled January 11, 2022

Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study the Commonwealth's public health system. Report.

Patron—Mullin

Committee Referral Pending

WHEREAS, in the Commonwealth, the provision of public health services is a partnership between the state and localities, with the Department of Health responsible for planning, oversight, and management of public health activities and local health districts responsible for the operation of local health departments for the delivery of public health services; and

WHEREAS, every locality in the Commonwealth is required to establish and maintain a local health department to provide basic public health services; local governing bodies may choose to operate independent health departments in accordance with the policies of a local board of health or may enter into a contract with the State Board of Health for operation of a local health department; and

WHEREAS, whenever, in the opinion of the State Health Commissioner, the operation of any local departments operated under contractual agreement with the Board of Health may be accomplished in a more efficient and economical manner by the consolidation of such local health departments, the Commission may propose the creation of a district health department composed of such local health departments; and

WHEREAS, currently, public health services are delivered through 35 local health departments serving local health districts that serve anywhere from a single to as many as 10 localities. Thirty-three of the 35 health districts are operated pursuant to a contract with the Board of Health, while two are operated independently; and

WHEREAS, service delivery models vary among local health districts, with some local health districts employing staff to provide services directly to clients while others contract with individual providers or nonprofits to ensure delivery of public health services; and

WHEREAS, while all local health districts provide a core of services, including communicable disease control, family planning, food establishment inspections, permitting of onsite sewage systems and well construction, and emergency preparedness, local health districts often provide additional services to meet the unique public health needs in the area served; and

WHEREAS, funding for local health districts is a mix of federal, state, and local funds, with the amount of funding available to local health districts and local match rates for localities participating in local health districts varying substantially; and

WHEREAS, variations in size, organization, operation, oversight, funding, and services create significant challenges for the Commonwealth's local health districts and recent events have exacerbated many of the challenges faced by local health districts in the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission be directed to study the resources for the Commonwealth's public health system.

In conducting its study, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall evaluate structure, organization, operations, and resources of the existing public health system and the effectiveness of the current public health system in meeting public health need and shall develop recommendations for improving the Commonwealth's public health system to improve overall public health.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission by the Department of Health. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission for this study, upon request.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall complete its meetings for the first year by November 30, 2022, and for the second year by November 30, 2023, 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 next Regular Session of the General Assembly for each year. Each executive summary shall state whether the Joint Legislative Audit and Review 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 summaries and reports 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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