

Senate Resolution 1134

By: Senator Schaefer of the 50th

A RESOLUTION

1 Creating the Senate Study Committee on Mental Health Screening in Public Schools; and for
2 other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, mental health screening methods for children and adolescents vary from state
4 to state, but usually involve a self-administered computer interview or "survey" to determine
5 how they feel emotionally (anxious or worried, sad or depressed) or their behavior at the
6 present time or in the past; and

7 WHEREAS, based on the evaluation of a child's answers regarding his or her feelings or
8 behavior, the child could be given a diagnosis of a "mental disorder" or asked to undertake
9 a follow-up interview or evaluation to determine if he or she has a mental disorder or
10 syndrome; and

11 WHEREAS, there are currently 374 diagnoses of mental disorders in the American
12 Psychiatric Association's diagnostic manual; and

13 WHEREAS, the former U.S. Surgeon General, in his 1999 Report on Mental Health, stated
14 "the diagnosis of mental disorders is often believed to be more difficult than diagnosis of
15 medical disorders *since there is no definitive lesion, laboratory test or abnormality in brain*
16 *tissue that can identify the illness*" [emphasis added]; and

17 WHEREAS, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) conducted a study and
18 "found no evidence that screening for suicide risk reduces suicide attempts or mortality"; and

19 WHEREAS, however, commonly prescribed drugs to treat mental disorders can have serious
20 effects on some children and adults and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has
21 required that manufacturers of antidepressants place a "black box" warning, their most severe
22 warning to the general public, on their antidepressants because of suicide risks for all
23 antidepressants prescribed to children under the age of 18 years; and

1 WHEREAS, to consider the potential problem of over-prescribing medications for children
2 and over-diagnosing children with mental health disorders, it would be beneficial to conduct
3 a study on the administration of mental health screening in Georgia public schools, including
4 interviews and surveys, to students automatically without regard to whether there was a prior
5 indication of a need for mental health treatment for the student or students.

6 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that there is created the Senate
7 Study Committee on Mental Health Screening in Public Schools to be composed of five
8 members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Assignments. The
9 Senate Committee on Assignments shall designate a member of the committee as chairperson
10 of the committee. The chairperson shall call all meetings of the committee.

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the committee shall undertake a study of the issues
12 discussed above and other related matters and recommend any action or legislation which
13 the committee deems necessary or appropriate. The committee may conduct such meetings
14 at such places and at such times as it may deem necessary or convenient to enable it to
15 exercise fully and effectively its powers, perform its duties, and accomplish the objectives
16 and purposes of this resolution. The members of the committee shall receive the allowances
17 provided for in Code Section 28-1-8 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated. The
18 allowances authorized by this resolution shall not be received by any member of the
19 committee for more than three days unless additional days are authorized. The funds
20 necessary to carry out the provisions of this resolution shall come from the funds
21 appropriated to the Senate. In the event the committee makes a report of its findings and
22 recommendations, with suggestions for proposed legislation, if any, such report shall be
23 made on or before December 31, 2006. The committee shall stand abolished on December
24 31, 2006.