

House Resolution 502

By: Representatives Tanner of the 9th, Jones of the 47th, O`Neal of the 146th, Abrams of the 89th, Lindsey of the 54th, and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Creating the Joint Study Committee on Mental Health and School Violence; and for other
2 purposes.

3 WHEREAS, during recent months, the citizens of this state have been saddened by the
4 numerous acts of violence in schools and communities that have taken the lives of many
5 promising young people; and

6 WHEREAS, many of these acts of violence have occurred in schools and caused increased
7 concern for the safety of our children; and

8 WHEREAS, many, if not all, of the perpetrators of these acts of violence have been persons
9 who are mentally ill; and

10 WHEREAS, a significant number of the individuals incarcerated in our jails and prisons have
11 untreated mental illnesses which are exacerbated by their abuse of drugs, the effect of
12 prescription drugs, their failure to take prescribed medication, or a combination of such
13 factors; and

14 WHEREAS, for a variety of reasons, a number of facilities for the treatment of the mentally
15 ill have closed in the last several years, leaving those individuals with no place to turn for
16 treatment or the mentally ill are unaware of the availability of services to assist them or how
17 to obtain such services; and

18 WHEREAS, the courts have undertaken efforts to deal with this situation through the HELP
19 courts but this is a new and developing area in this state; and

20 WHEREAS, efforts need to be undertaken to ensure the safety of our schools and
21 communities, but not at the cost of the loss of the liberties guaranteed by the Constitution of
22 the United States; and

23 WHEREAS, a study of the efforts in treating mentally ill individuals in this state needs to be
24 undertaken with a focus on examining community infrastructure, crisis services, provision
25 of services across the life span from youth to older adults, geographic gaps and diversity,
26 workforce needs, provider network development and accountability, funding and the need
27 to keep dollars within the system as we transition away from hospital-based delivery models
28 of treatment, and support services; and

29 WHEREAS, a study also needs to be undertaken to review general security for Georgia
30 citizens including school security and the overall school environment in this state to
31 determine if there are steps that could be taken to improve the safety and security of the
32 students, faculty, and staff at the schools, such as improved designs and architecture, the use
33 of armed school resource officers, the arming of certain administrative personnel, and the
34 implementation of better disciplinary practices to reduce student-on-student violence.

35 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
36 that there is created the Joint Study Committee on Mental Health and School Violence to be
37 composed of nine members, three members of the House of Representatives to be appointed
38 by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, three members of the Senate to be appointed
39 by the Lieutenant Governor, and three members to be appointed by the Governor. The
40 Speaker of the House of Representatives shall designate one of the appointees from the
41 House of Representatives as a co-chairperson and the Lieutenant Governor shall designate
42 one of the appointees from the Senate as a co-chairperson. The committee shall meet at the
43 call of the co-chairpersons.

44 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the committee shall undertake a study of the conditions,
45 needs, issues, and problems mentioned above or related thereto and recommend any actions
46 or legislation which the committee deems necessary or appropriate. The committee may
47 conduct such meetings at such places and at such times as it may deem necessary or
48 convenient to enable it to exercise fully and effectively its powers, perform its duties, and
49 accomplish the objectives and purposes of this resolution. All agencies of the state are
50 directed to provide the committee with such assistance as the committee shall require to
51 perform its assigned duties. In the event the committee makes a report of its findings and
52 recommendations, with suggestions for proposed legislation, if any, such report shall be
53 made on or before December 31, 2013. The committee shall stand abolished on
54 December 31, 2013.