

The House Committee on Health and Human Services offers the following substitute to HR 502:

A RESOLUTION

1 Creating the Joint Study Committee on Mental Health Access; and for other purposes.

2 WHEREAS, during recent months, the citizens of this state have been saddened by tragedies
3 that have taken the lives of many innocent people; and

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

6 WHEREAS, many of these tragedies were committed by individuals who may have had
7 mental illnesses; and

8 WHEREAS, a variety of factors contribute to many people with mental illnesses not
9 receiving adequate treatment, including stigma, limited public resources and workforce
10 challenges, and limited awareness of available services; and

11 WHEREAS, the state mental health system was historically based around institutions and is
12 transitioning to a community based model that must maintain adequate funding and other
13 resources to ensure easy access for individuals in need; and

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

29 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
30 that there is created the Joint Study Committee on Mental Health Access to be composed of
31 nine members, three members of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the
32 Speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom shall be from the minority party;
33 three members of the Senate to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, one of whom shall
34 be appointed from the minority party; and three members to be appointed by the Governor.
35 The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall designate one of the appointees from the
36 House of Representatives as a cochairperson, and the Lieutenant Governor shall designate
37 one of the appointees from the Senate as a cochairperson. The committee shall meet at the
38 call of the cochairpersons.

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