

Senate Resolution 722

By: Senators James of the 35th, Butler of the 55th, Sims of the 12th, Lucas of the 26th, Jones II of the 22nd and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Creating the Joint Study Committee on Mental Illness Initiative, Reform, Public Health, and
2 Safety; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, mental illness affects the emotional and behavioral well-being of individuals
4 and conditions and disorders can include depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, and
5 schizophrenia; and

6 WHEREAS, one in five adults experiences mental illness in some form in any given year.
7 Data indicate that at least 1.4 million adults in Georgia have some form of mental illness; and

8 WHEREAS, the National Alliance on Mental Illness reports that Georgia has close
9 to 349,000 adults and about 111,000 children living with serious mental health conditions;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, the Georgia Department of Corrections indicates that one in six prisoners has
12 been diagnosed with a mental illness; and

13 WHEREAS, Mental Health America (MHA), formerly the National Mental Health
14 Association, indicates the following:

15 (1) Georgia ranks twenty-ninth for adults with any mental illness with a total of
16 1,360,000;

17 (2) Georgia ranks near the bottom in spending among state mental health agencies, at a
18 rate of \$59.00 per capita in fiscal 2013;

19 (3) Georgia ranks thirty-seventh for uninsured adults (313,000) with any mental illness;
20 and

21 (4) Georgia ranks last in the availability of mental health professionals with 1 for every
22 1,440 people; and

23 WHEREAS, local counties are able to implement accountability courts through the Georgia
24 Council on Criminal Justice Reform resulting in mental health courts; and

25 WHEREAS, in 2015, data compiled by the Georgia Sheriffs' Association indicate that in 73
26 of 159 counties, law enforcement officials traveled nearly 2 million miles and spent more
27 than 12,000 hours transporting mental health patients. This impedes law enforcement's
28 availability to respond elsewhere within communities they serve; and

29 WHEREAS, the closing of mental hospitals has added to the increase of mentally ill adults
30 housed in the local and county jails. Coupled with the decrease in state psychiatric hospital
31 beds, this has forced law enforcement to maintain and treat mentally ill adults in the jails,
32 rather than specialized facilities; and

33 WHEREAS, research indicates that when mental illness is treated appropriately with
34 medication and supervision, patients can lead productive lives; and

35 WHEREAS, a study of the efforts in treating mentally ill individuals in this state needs to be
36 undertaken with a focus on examining the county and municipality infrastructures inclusive
37 of residential and congregate care housing options. The study shall include the following
38 considerations: transportation needs, crisis services, life span service requirements,
39 geographic and diversity gaps, workforce needs, and provider network development and
40 accountability. Other issues to be considered in this study include funding requirements and
41 the need to keep dollars within the system as the state transitions from hospital-based service
42 delivery treatment models.

43 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
44 GEORGIA:

45 (1) **Creation of joint study committee.** There is created the Joint Study Committee on
46 Mental Illness Initiative, Reform, Public Health, and Safety.

47 (2) **Members and officers.**

48 (A) The committee shall be composed of nine members.

49 (B) The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint three members of the
50 House of Representatives, one of whom shall be appointed from the minority party.
51 The Speaker shall designate one of the members as a cochairperson.

52 (C) The President of the Senate shall appoint three members of the Senate, one of
53 whom shall be appointed from the minority party. The President shall designate one
54 of the members as cochairperson.

55 (D) The Governor shall appoint three members.

56 (3) **Powers and duties.** The committee shall undertake a study of the conditions, needs,
57 issues, and problems mentioned above or related thereto and recommend any action or
58 legislation which the committee deems necessary or appropriate.

59 (4) **Meetings.** The cochairpersons shall call all meetings of the committee. The
60 committee may conduct such meetings at such places and at such times as it may deem
61 necessary or convenient to enable it to exercise fully and effectively its powers, perform
62 its duties, and accomplish the objectives and purposes of this resolution.

63 (5) **Allowances and funding.**

64 (A) The legislative members of the committee shall receive the allowances provided
65 for in Code Section 28-1-8 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated.

66 (B) Members of the committee who are state officials, other than legislative members,
67 or state employees shall receive no compensation for their services on the committee,
68 but they may be reimbursed for expenses incurred by them in the performance of their
69 duties as members of the committee in the same manner as they are reimbursed for
70 expenses in their capacities as state officials or employees.

71 (C) Members of the committee who are not legislators, state officials, or state
72 employees shall receive a daily expense allowance in an amount the same as that
73 specified in subsection (b) of Code Section 45-7-21 of the Official Code of Georgia
74 Annotated, as well as the mileage or transportation allowance authorized for state
75 employees.

76 (D) The allowances and expenses authorized by this resolution shall not be received
77 by any member of the committee for more than five days unless additional days are
78 authorized. Funds necessary to carry out the provisions of this resolution shall come
79 from funds appropriated to the House of Representatives and Senate; except that funds
80 for the reimbursement of the expenses of state officials, other than legislative members,
81 and state employees shall come from funds appropriated to or otherwise available to
82 their respective agencies.

83 (6) **Report.**

84 (A) In the event the committee adopts any specific findings or recommendations that
85 include suggestions for proposed legislation, the cochairpersons shall file a report of the
86 same prior to the date of abolishment specified in this resolution, subject to
87 subparagraph (C) of this paragraph.

88 (B) In the event the committee adopts a report that does not include suggestions for
89 proposed legislation, the cochairpersons shall file the report, subject to subparagraph
90 (C) of this paragraph.

- 91 (C) No report shall be filed unless the same has been approved prior to the date of
92 abolishment specified in this resolution by majority vote of a quorum of the committee.
93 A report so approved shall be signed by the cochairpersons of the committee and filed
94 with the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the Senate.
- 95 (D) In the absence of an approved report, the cochairpersons may file with the Clerk
96 of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the Senate copies of the minutes
97 of the meetings of the committee in lieu thereof.
- 98 (7) **Abolishment.** The committee shall stand abolished on December 1, 2016.