**A** **JOINT RESOLUTION**

TO CREATE THE AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER STUDY COMMITTEE ON EARLY INTERVENTION AND TO PROVIDE FOR ITS PURPOSE, MEMBERS, AND DUTIES AND TO PROVIDE THAT THE STUDY COMMITTEE MUST SUBMIT ITS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 1, 2011 AT WHICH TIME THE STUDY COMMITTEE IS ABOLISHED.

Whereas, autism spectrum disorder is a bio‑neurological developmental disability that generally appears before the age of three. Although its prevalence is not affected by race, region, or socioeconomic status, it is diagnosed four times more often in boys than in girls and the prevalence has grown to an alarming one in one hundred fifty people across the United States; and

Whereas, autism spectrum disorder impacts the normal development of the brain in the areas of social interaction, communication skills, and cognitive function. Individuals with autism spectrum disorder typically have difficulties in verbal and nonverbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities; and

Whereas, individuals with autism spectrum disorder often suffer from numerous physical conditions which may include: allergies, asthma, epilepsy, digestive disorders, persistent viral infections, feeding disorders, sensory integration dysfunction, sleeping disorders, and more; and

Whereas, although there is currently no cure for autism spectrum disorder, with early screening, diagnosis, intervention, and treatment, the diverse symptoms related to autism spectrum disorder and the outcomes achieved can be greatly improved. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina.

SECTION 1. (A) There is created the Autism Spectrum Disorder Study Committee on Early Intervention to study the prevalence, screening, diagnosis, and intervention of autism spectrum disorder in this State so as to:

(1) research the age at which children are screened and diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder;

(2) evaluate the ability of parents and professionals to recognize signs of autism spectrum disorder early and to access screening, diagnostic, and intervention services;

(3) evaluate the presence and effectiveness of education, training, and program resources available to assist families and professionals in the early recognition of autism spectrum disorder and in seeking and acquiring screening, diagnosis, and intervention;

(4) identify gaps in training, medical care, education, and program services needed to achieve early screening, diagnosis, intervention, and evidence‑based treatment of autism spectrum disorder;

(5) identify and determine application of best practices; and

(6) recommend changes in medical care, education, training, and other programs and services to ensure early screening, diagnosis, evidence‑based intervention, and treatment of autism spectrum disorder.

(B) For purposes of this joint resolution ‘autism spectrum disorder’ means Autistic Disorder, Rhett’s Disorder, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, Asperger’s Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified.

(C) The study committee must be composed of: two members of the Senate to be appointed by the President Pro Tempore, two members of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker of the House, one member to be appointed by the Governor, and:

(1) State Superintendent of the Department of Education or his designee;

(2) Director of the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, or her designee;

(3) Director of the Department of Mental Health, or his designee;

(4) Director of the Department of Health and Environmental Control, or his designee;

(5) Director of the Department of Health and Human Services, or her designee;

(6) Director of First Steps, or her designee;

(7) Director of the S.C. Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics, or his designee;

(8) Director of the Center for Disability Resources, Department of Pediatrics, University of South Carolina School of Medicine, or his designee;

(9) Director of the University of South Carolina College of Education Program in Special Education‑Autism Program, or his designee;

(10) Director of the Medical University of South Carolina Department of Pediatrics, Division of Developmental Pediatrics, or his designee;

(11) Director of the Greenwood Genetic Center, or his designee;

(12) Director of the South Carolina Autism Society, or his designee.

(13) Four parents recommended by various autism associations in South Carolina and appointed by the Governor as follows:

(a) one parent of a child with autism spectrum disorder under six years of age;

(b) one parent of a child with autism spectrum disorder age six through twenty-one years of age;

(c) one parent of a child with autism spectrum disorder over twenty-two years of age;

(d) one parent of a child with autism spectrum disorder.

(D) The study committee shall meet as often as is necessary, or as called by the chair, and shall convene no later than sixty days after the effective date of this joint resolution, at which time at least a majority of the members must have been appointed.

(E) The staffing for the study committee must be provided by the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs and the appropriate committees of the Senate and House of Representatives that oversee health care policy in this State.

(F) The members of the study committee may not receive compensation and are not entitled to receive mileage, subsistence, and per diem authorized by law for members of state boards, committees, and commissions.

(G) The study committee shall submit a report containing its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly and the Governor no later than December 1, 2011, at which time the study committee is abolished.

SECTION 2. This joint resolution takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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