

House Resolution 421

By: Representatives Dempsey of the 13th, Jones of the 47th, Cooper of the 43rd, Oliver of the 82nd, and Dickey of the 140th

A RESOLUTION

1 Creating the Joint Study Committee on Infant and Toddler Social and Emotional Health; and
2 for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, the Georgia General Assembly is concerned with the early intervention and
4 prevention of mental health problems in children and adolescents in Georgia and the
5 resulting impact this has on these children, their families, and the citizens of this state; and

6 WHEREAS, in the first years of a baby's life, more than 1 million new neural connections
7 are formed every second; and

8 WHEREAS, babies' earliest relationships and experiences shape the architecture of their
9 brain, creating a foundation on which future development and learning unfolds; and

10 WHEREAS, as children mature, their emotional health supports growth and well-being in
11 other essential areas including physical development and health, cognitive skills, language
12 and literacy, social skills, and even their approach to learning and readiness for school; and

13 WHEREAS, during the infant and toddler years, there are many opportunities to promote
14 emotional health, to prevent emotional disturbances from taking root, and to treat mental
15 health problems before they can manifest into more severe problems later in life; and

16 WHEREAS, while positive early childhood experiences promote strong emotional health,
17 negative experiences can adversely impact brain development, with serious lifelong
18 consequences; and

19 WHEREAS, if untreated, infants' mental health disorders can have detrimental effects on
20 every aspect of a child's development (i.e., physical, cognitive, communication, sensory,
21 emotional, social, and motor skills) and the child's ability to succeed in school and in life; and

22 WHEREAS, when mental health concerns are identified early, there are services that can
23 redirect the course and place children who are at risk on a pathway for healthy development;
24 and

25 WHEREAS, it would be beneficial to study the full continuum of services – from promotion
26 to prevention to treatment – that is needed to best support babies, young children, and the
27 significant adults in their lives; and

28 WHEREAS, attention and resources given to the mental health needs of adolescents and
29 older children are of great importance, the General Assembly is equally as concerned about
30 studying the effects of adverse childhood experiences on infants and toddlers and interested
31 in learning about services specifically for those ages.

32 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
33 GEORGIA:

34 (1) **Creation of joint study committee.** There is created the Joint Study Committee on
35 Infant and Toddler Social and Emotional Health.

36 (2) **Members and officers.** The committee shall be composed of:

37 (A) Three members of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker
38 of the House of Representatives, who shall designate one of such members as
39 cochairperson;

40 (B) Three members of the Senate to be appointed by the President of the Senate, who
41 shall designate one of such members as cochairperson;

42 (C) One representative from the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental
43 Disabilities;

44 (D) One representative from the Department of Early Care and Learning;

45 (E) One representative from the Department of Public Health;

46 (F) One representative from Voices for Georgia's Children;

47 (G) One representative from Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students;
48 and

49 (H) One representative from the Georgia chapter of the American Academy of
50 Pediatrics.

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

54 (4) **Meetings.** The cochairpersons shall call all meetings of the committee. The
55 committee may conduct such meetings at such places and at such times as it may deem

56 necessary or convenient to enable it to exercise fully and effectively its powers, perform
57 its duties, and accomplish the objectives and purposes of this resolution.

58 **(5) Allowances, expenses, and funding.**

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

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

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

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

78 **(6) Report.**

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

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

86 (C) No report shall be filed unless the same has been approved prior to the date of
87 abolishment specified in this resolution by majority vote of a quorum of the committee.
88 A report so approved shall be signed by the cochairpersons of the committee and filed
89 with the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the Senate.

90 (D) In the absence of an approved report, the cochairpersons may file with the Clerk
91 of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the Senate copies of the minutes
92 of the meetings of the committee in lieu thereof.

93 (7) **Abolishment.** The committee shall stand abolished on December 1, 2019.