

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

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**By: Delegates Marriott, Hurson, Rawlings, Parker, Gordon, Rosenberg,
Nathan-Pulliam, E. Burns, Howard, C. Mitchell, Opara, Oaks, McIntosh, Fulton,
and Boston**

Introduced and read first time: February 21, 1997
Assigned to: Commerce and Government Matters

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

1 A House Joint Resolution concerning

2 **Commission on Concentrated Poverty in Maryland**

3 FOR the purpose of requesting the Governor to establish a Commission on Concentrated
4 Poverty in Maryland to study the extent and implications of concentrated poverty in
5 Maryland; and generally relating to the study of concentrated poverty in Maryland.

6 WHEREAS, The increasing concentration of poor people in neighborhoods with
7 high levels of poverty is among the trends of most concern in Maryland; and

8 WHEREAS, Social scientists agree that the number of neighborhoods of
9 concentrated poverty has grown in recent years and that the poor living in these
10 neighborhoods have become increasingly isolated from the social and economic
11 mainstream; and

12 WHEREAS, The concentration of poor people living in poverty generates a wide
13 array of social problems, including joblessness, low levels of academic achievement, high
14 rates of students dropping out of school, teen pregnancy, poor health, abandoned
15 housing, drug abuse, and crime, that are different in magnitude and kind than the
16 problems poor people face in less isolated environments; and

17 WHEREAS, There are 90,000 Maryland children growing up and attending school
18 in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty and substantial evidence exists that the life
19 chances of these children are diminished; and

20 WHEREAS, One of the most consistent findings in education research is the
21 powerful relationship between concentrated poverty and academic results. Schools with
22 high proportions of children living in poverty show poor performance regardless of the
23 school system in which they are located. Maryland has 255 such schools located in 16
24 school systems, including 148 in Baltimore City, 41 in Prince George's County, 12 in
25 Allegany County, and 10 in Montgomery County; and

26 WHEREAS, Educators have found that schools with populations consisting of
27 40-50% poor children require increased per pupil spending and specific school wide
28 approaches to address the problems associated with poverty. In 1994 the Governor's
29 Commission on School Funding estimated these additional costs at \$1,500 per year for
30 every child approved for free or reduced price lunch and recommended that priority be
31 given to schools with the highest concentrations of children living in poverty; and

1 WHEREAS, The social problems that correlate with concentrated poverty also
2 require increased State and local expenditures for social services, public health, law
3 enforcement, corrections, and other public services, and that these expenditures erode
4 the tax base; and

5 WHEREAS, There is substantial evidence that concentrated poverty and the
6 resulting disparities in income within a metropolitan area negatively impact on job growth
7 for the entire metropolitan employment market and hamper economic progress; and

8 WHEREAS, The concentration of poor families in areas that have lost large
9 numbers of entry level and blue collar jobs due to the decline of manufacturing and other
10 changes in the economy jeopardizes the success of State welfare reform initiatives; and

11 WHEREAS, The movement of the middle class away from the problems and tax
12 burdens generated by concentrated poverty fuels sprawl development and loss of open
13 space, and requires costly public investment in new infrastructure; and

14 WHEREAS, Trends show that the concentration of poverty in Maryland is
15 increasing dramatically even while State and regional poverty rates have been falling. For
16 example, since 1970, the poverty rate in metropolitan Baltimore has fallen from 11.3% to
17 10.1% but the number of neighborhoods with concentrated poverty, census tracts with
18 20% or more of the population in poverty, have increased from 70 to 90 in Baltimore City
19 and from 3 to 11 in the metropolitan counties. The number and percentage of the poor
20 that live in these poverty concentrated areas have also increased; and

21 WHEREAS, Baltimore, depending on the measurement used, ranks among the top
22 three or four cities, among major metropolitan areas in the nation, on indices that
23 measure the extent and intensity of poverty concentration; and

24 WHEREAS, The growing problem of concentrated poverty diminishes the quality
25 of life for all Marylanders; now, therefore, be it

26 RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the
27 Governor is requested to establish a Commission on Concentrated Poverty in Maryland;
28 and be it further

29 RESOLVED, That the Commission be composed of 19 members as follows:

30 (1) (i) 3 members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the
31 House; and

32 (ii) 3 members of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of the
33 Senate;

34 (2) 1 member from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene;

35 (3) 1 member from the State Department of Education;

36 (4) 1 member from the Department of Housing and Community Development;

37 (5) 1 member from the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services;

38 (6) 1 member from the Department of Business and Economic Development;

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1 (7) 1 member from the Department of Human Resources; and

2 (8) 7 members from the academic disciplines of economics, sociology, urban
3 studies, social policy, and psychology; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That the Governor designate the chairman of the Commission; and
5 be it further

6 RESOLVED, That the Commission hold its first meeting on or before July 1, 1997;
7 and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That the staffing for the Commission shall be provided by the Office
9 of the Governor; and be it further

10 RESOLVED, That the purpose of the Commission is to:

11 (1) Study data and other research maintained by the State, other states, and the
12 federal government that relates to concentrated poverty;

13 (2) Determine the extent of and evaluate trends in concentrated poverty in
14 Maryland;

15 (3) Determine and assess the factors, including economic and demographic
16 factors and public policies, causing increases in concentrated poverty in Maryland;

17 (4) Assess the correlation between various indicators of social distress, including
18 crime, job loss, educational performance, and concentrated poverty;

19 (5) Assess the effect of conditions in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty on
20 children and other individuals living in those areas;

21 (6) (i) Quantify the fiscal impact of concentrated poverty on local and State
22 budgets; and

23 (ii) Estimate the effect on the tax base that will occur and the increase in
24 State and local expenditures that will be required if trends showing increases in the
25 number of neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and percentages of poor people
26 residing in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty continue;

27 (7) Assess the impact of concentrated poverty on small businesses located in
28 neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and on economic growth in regional employment
29 markets;

30 (8) Evaluate the effectiveness of public policies and State programs in addressing
31 and alleviating concentrations of poverty;

32 (9) Hold public meetings for the purpose of collecting data;

33 (10) Develop any recommendations that the Commission considers appropriate for
34 changes in statutes, regulations, organization, or procedures that will prevent the spread
35 of concentrated poverty and will alleviate existing conditions; and

36 (11) Study and develop recommendations concerning any other issues that the
37 Commission deems relevant to the study of concentrated poverty; and be it further

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1 RESOLVED, That the Commission report its findings and recommendations to the
2 Governor and the General Assembly on or before July 1, 1998; and be it further

3 RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded by the Department of
4 Legislative Reference to the Honorable Parris N. Glendening, Governor of Maryland; the
5 Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr., President of the Senate of Maryland; the
6 Honorable Casper R. Taylor, Jr., Speaker of the House of Delegates; the Honorable
7 Martin P. Wasserman, Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene; the Honorable Patricia
8 J. Payne, Secretary of Housing and Community Development; the Honorable James T.
9 Brady, Secretary of Business and Economic Development; the Honorable Nancy S.
10 Grasmick, State Superintendent of Education; the Honorable Bishop L. Robinson,
11 Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services; and the Honorable Alvin C. Collins,
12 Secretary of Human Resources.