

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 22

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1998 Regular Session
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By: **Delegates Muse, E. Burns, Nathan-Pulliam, C. Mitchell, D. Davis, and
Fulton**

Introduced and read first time: February 19, 1998

Assigned to: Rules and Executive Nominations

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

1 A House Joint Resolution concerning

2 **Task Force to Study the Effects of Cult Activities on Public Senior Higher**
3 **Education Institutions**

4 FOR the purpose of providing for the establishment of a Task Force to Study the
5 Effects of Cult Activities on Public Senior Higher Education Institutions;
6 providing for the membership of the Task Force; and providing for a report to
7 the Governor and the General Assembly.

8 WHEREAS, A recent mass suicide in California, cult-motivated murders in
9 Mississippi and Florida, and a subway gassing incident in Japan have increased
10 national awareness of the destructive nature of cult activities; and

11 WHEREAS, It has been estimated that there are as many as 2,000 cults
12 operating within the United States with 4 million to 6 million members; and

13 WHEREAS, Cult recruitment activities are often directed towards students on
14 college campuses; and

15 WHEREAS, College students are particularly vulnerable to cult recruitment
16 because they are often grappling with becoming independent, overwhelmed with new
17 responsibilities and relationships, adjusting to new environments, and anxious about
18 their futures; and

19 WHEREAS, College students who become involved with cults undergo
20 personality changes, suffer academically and financially, are alienated from their
21 families and friends, and are robbed of the very things universities were designed to
22 encourage: freedom of thought, intellectual growth, and personal development; and

23 WHEREAS, Some college administrators have become concerned about cult
24 activities on campus and have taken action to address the situation, but many others
25 have failed to recognize the threat, have refused to deal with the problem, or are
26 searching for policy directions as to how to deal with it; and

27 WHEREAS, Although the United States Constitution and the Maryland
28 Constitution clearly and properly limit the ability of any government entity to
29 interfere with the free exercise of religion by any person or group, the State of

1 Maryland has a right and a responsibility to examine the behaviors of members of any
2 group who violate State or local law or campus policies regarding deception,
3 harassment, or fraud, or who threaten the mental, emotional, or physical well-being
4 of the citizens of Maryland or students enrolled in the University System of
5 Maryland, Morgan State University, and St. Mary's College; now, therefore, be it

6 RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That there shall
7 be a Task Force to Study the Effects of Cult Activities on Public Senior Higher
8 Education Institutions ; and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall be composed of:

10 (1) Two members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of
11 the House;

12 (2) Two members of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President
13 of the Senate;

14 (3) The Chancellor of the University System of Maryland or the
15 Chancellor's designee;

16 (4) The President of St. Mary's College or the President's designee;

17 (5) The President of Morgan State University or the President's
18 designee;

19 (6) A member of the Board of Regents of the University System of
20 Maryland, appointed by the Governor;

21 (7) A member of the Maryland Higher Education Commission, appointed
22 by the Governor;

23 (8) Two parents of current or former cult members, appointed by the
24 Governor; and

25 (9) Two student government representatives from the University System
26 of Maryland, St. Mary's College, or Morgan State University, appointed by the
27 Governor; and be it further

28 RESOLVED, That the Department of Legislative Services shall provide staffing
29 for the Task Force; and be it further

30 RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall communicate with and obtain
31 information from cult awareness organizations, former cult members, college
32 administrators, campus security personnel, campus ministers, families of cult
33 members, and other interested parties regarding the recruitment and organizational
34 practices of cults, the extent of cult activities within the University System of
35 Maryland, St. Mary's College, and Morgan State University, the response of college
36 administrators in Maryland and around the nation to cult activities, and the effect of
37 cult involvement on students; and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That no later than September 30, 1999, the Task Force shall
2 submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, pursuant to § 2-1246
3 of the State Government Article, to the General Assembly; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded by the Department of
5 Legislative Services to the Honorable Parris N. Glendening, Governor of Maryland;
6 the Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr., President of the Senate of Maryland; the
7 Honorable Casper R. Taylor, Jr., Speaker of the House of Delegates; the Chancellor of
8 the University System of Maryland; the President of St. Mary's College; and the
9 President of Morgan State University.