

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  
Re-referred to: Appropriations, February 23, 1998

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Committee Report: Favorable with amendments  
House action: Adopted  
Read second time: March 27, 1998

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RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

5 WHEREAS, Although the United States Constitution and the Maryland  
6 Constitution clearly and properly limit the ability of any government entity to  
7 interfere with the free exercise of religion by any person or group, the State of  
8 Maryland has a right and a responsibility to examine the behaviors of members of any  
9 group who violate State or local law or campus policies regarding deception,  
10 harassment, or fraud, or who threaten the mental, emotional, or physical well-being  
11 of the citizens of Maryland or students enrolled in the University System of  
12 Maryland, Morgan State University, and St. Mary's College; now, therefore, be it

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

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

17 (1) Two members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of  
18 the House;

19 (2) Two members of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President  
20 of the Senate;

21 (3) The Chancellor of the University System of Maryland or the  
22 Chancellor's designee;

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

24 (5) The President of Morgan State University or the President's  
25 designee;

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

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

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

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

35 RESOLVED, That the ~~Department of Legislative Services~~ Maryland Higher  
36 Education Commission shall provide staffing for the Task Force; and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall communicate with and obtain  
2 information from cult awareness organizations, former cult members, college  
3 administrators, campus security personnel, campus ministers, families of cult  
4 members, and other interested parties regarding the recruitment and organizational  
5 practices of cults, the extent of cult activities within the University System of  
6 Maryland, St. Mary's College, and Morgan State University, the response of college  
7 administrators in Maryland and around the nation to cult activities, and the effect of  
8 cult involvement on students; and be it further

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

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