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LRB095 11875 NHT 34976 r

1 SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The provision of a free, appropriate public
3 education for a student with a visual impairment can occur only
4 with the proper concentrated services, equipment, and access to
5 education; and

6 WHEREAS, Children and youth who are visually impaired face
7 unique and significant barriers related to their instruction
8 that profoundly affect most aspects of the educational process,
9 including the impact of ever changing technology and the world
10 it encompasses; and

11 WHEREAS, Blindness and visual impairments are often
12 considered secondary disabilities, thus the specialized
13 educational needs of the blind and visually impaired are rarely
14 fully addressed; and

15 WHEREAS, Children and youth with visual impairments are
16 guaranteed an education in the least restrictive setting
17 possible, meaning that they are entitled to be integrated as
18 fully as possible into the regular classroom, unless there is
19 clearly a reason for the child to be in a more specialized
20 program; and

21 WHEREAS, Full access to education depends upon an

1 educational environment that utilizes the appropriate
2 materials and properly and fully trained staff and provides for
3 direct communication between staff, students, parents, and
4 peers; and

5 WHEREAS, The Illinois School for the Visually Impaired
6 should become the go-to facility for best teaching practices
7 regarding programs for children with visual impairments and the
8 statewide center for teacher training and specialized
9 curriculum development; and

10 WHEREAS, The Illinois School for the Visually Impaired
11 should include on-going teacher training for itinerant,
12 mainstream, and private school educators; and

13 WHEREAS, The Illinois School for the Visually Impaired
14 should include specific programming on visual impairments for
15 teaching and rehabilitation professionals from both the State
16 Board of Education and the Department of Human Services; and

17 WHEREAS, While unemployment in the nation continues to
18 drop, the unemployment rate for people with visual impairments
19 is over 70%; and

20 WHEREAS, There should be greater access to transitional
21 services for students who are blind or visually impaired

1 entering vocational rehabilitation services and employment;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, Successful transitional programs may result in
4 better services and jobs, knowledgeable self-advocates, and
5 achievement of competitive outcomes; therefore, be it

6 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL
7 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
8 CONCURRING HEREIN, that there is created the Joint Task Force
9 on Blind and Visually Impaired Educational Options, consisting
10 of 13 members appointed as follows:

11 (1) the President of the Senate, the Minority Leader of
12 the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives,
13 and the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives
14 shall each appoint one member; and

15 (2) the following entities shall each appoint one
16 member: the State Board of Education, the Illinois
17 Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools, the
18 LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the
19 Illinois Committee of Blind Vendors, Illinois Parents of
20 the Visually Impaired, the Blind Services Planning
21 Council, the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired's
22 Advisory Board, the Visual Disabilities education program
23 at Northern Illinois University, and the Specialist in Low
24 Vision and Blindness education program at Illinois State

1 University; and be it further

2 RESOLVED, That all members of the Task Force shall serve
3 without compensation; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That the duty of the Task Force is to undertake a
5 comprehensive and thorough review of the education of and
6 services available to the blind and visually impaired children
7 of this State with the intent of making recommendations that
8 would recognize the need for delivering full educational
9 services to a blind or visually impaired student, ensure that
10 schools have the most updated and adequate equipment to provide
11 services to blind and visually impaired students, and recognize
12 the need for teachers trained in the unique needs of blind and
13 visually impaired students; recommending uniform methods and
14 procedures to develop curricula for blind and visually impaired
15 students; and providing a comprehensive review of the needs and
16 operation of the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired and
17 making recommendations for changes; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the Task Force should look towards states
19 that have successful, independent, and adequate educational
20 models for students with visual impairments, such as the
21 Washington State School for the Blind; and be it further

22 RESOLVED, That the Task Force may request assistance from

1 any entity necessary or useful for the performance of the Task
2 Force's duties; and be it further

3 RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall report its
4 recommendations to the General Assembly on or before January 1,
5 2008; and be it further

6 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
7 delivered to the State Board of Education, the Illinois
8 Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools, the
9 LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Illinois
10 Committee of Blind Vendors, Illinois Parents of the Visually
11 Impaired, the Blind Services Planning Council, the Illinois
12 School for the Visually Impaired's Advisory Board, the Visual
13 Disabilities education program at Northern Illinois
14 University, and the Specialist in Low Vision and Blindness
15 education program at Illinois State University.