

Study Resolution

Effectiveness of self-sufficiency programs, and availability and affordability of childcare

Authorized by the Commission on November 7, 2022

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Social Services defines one of its objectives as “working to help people move from poverty to self-sufficiency,” and as of June 2022, there were 913,000 participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), 53,000 recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and 170,000 recipients of fuel or cooling assistance; and

WHEREAS, though the programs are not directly intended to help Virginians achieve self-sufficiency, there were also 2 million participants in the Medicaid or Family Access to Medical Insurance Security (FAMIS) programs; and

WHEREAS, access to affordable and quality childcare is a critical component of parents being able to work and be self-sufficient through the wages they earn, and many Virginians may face challenges finding childcare within a reasonable geographic proximity to their home or job, or may be unable to afford quality childcare that is available; and

WHEREAS, the state regulates approximately 5,000 licensed child care facilities, provides child care subsidies to support nearly 15,000 families, and offers a child care tax credit intended to reimburse individuals who file a tax return for a portion of the cost of child care; and

WHEREAS, JLARC has not reviewed the state’s child care regulations since 2004 and the impact of the state’s financial assistance programs on self-sufficiency since 2005, and JLARC reviewed some but not all aspects of child care availability and affordability in 2017; now therefore be it

RESOLVED by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission that staff be directed to review the effectiveness of Virginia’s financial assistance programs intended to help participants achieve self-sufficiency, as well as child care availability and affordability. In conducting its study staff shall (i) determine how effective relevant federal and state financial assistance programs are at helping participants achieve self-sufficiency, (ii) identify barriers program participants face achieving self-sufficiency, (iii) evaluate the supply of and demand for child care services, including availability, proximity, and affordability, (iv) identify barriers child care providers and families face in providing and receiving childcare, and (v) evaluate the effectiveness and impacts of state regulations on the quality and availability of child care.

JLARC shall make recommendations as necessary and review other issues as warranted.

All agencies of the Commonwealth, including the Virginia Department of Social Services, local departments of social services, Virginia Department of Education, and Department of Medical Assistance Services shall provide assistance, information, and data to JLARC for this study, upon request. JLARC staff shall have access to all information in the possession of agencies pursuant to § 30-59 and § 30-69 of the Code of Virginia. No provision of the Code of Virginia shall be interpreted as limiting or restricting the access of JLARC staff to information pursuant to its statutory authority.