HLS 11RS-304 **ORIGINAL**

Regular Session, 2011

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 16

BY REPRESENTATIVE KATZ

DRUGS/ILLEGAL: Authorizes and directs the Drug Policy Board to coordinate a study of the overall impact and estimated aggregate costs of illegal drug use in the state of La.

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To authorize and direct the Drug Policy Board to coordinate a study of the overall impact and estimated aggregate costs of illegal drug use in the state of Louisiana.

WHEREAS, drug abuse in Louisiana has a devastating effect on families and communities, and the human toll of drug abuse in our beloved state is tragic; and

WHEREAS, the economic costs associated with illegal drug use are considerable, including not only direct costs borne by the public in areas such as law enforcement, criminal justice, and public health, but also the opportunity cost of education and employment opportunities foregone by those who use illegal drugs; and

WHEREAS, in terms of effects on physical health, as reported by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, illegal drugs are far more harmful than alcohol, with the number of alcohol-induced deaths and drug-induced deaths roughly equivalent despite users of alcohol outnumbering users of drugs by a seven-to-one margin; and

WHEREAS, the Office of National Drug Control Policy indicates that known health care costs of drug abuse in the most recent period studied were over fifteen billion dollars annually; and

WHEREAS, chronic mental illness is inextricably linked with abuse of illegal drugs and is extremely costly to treat, as shown in a 1996 study conducted by Harvard Medical School researchers which concluded that psychiatric treatment costs for substance abusers are nearly sixty percent higher than the same treatment for nonabusers; and

WHEREAS, as documented in the most recent Louisiana Drug Threat Assessment conducted by the United States Department of Justice's National Drug Intelligence Center, over thirty percent of Louisiana prisoners are incarcerated for drug-related crimes, second only to those imprisoned for violent crimes (thirty-eight percent), with the latter crimes often having a root cause in drug abuse or distribution; and

WHEREAS, in the same Louisiana Drug Threat Assessment, a major Louisiana city estimated that as many as three quarters of all homicides in the city are drug related; and

WHEREAS, evidence shows that illegal drug use among students and parents has a highly detrimental impact on educational prospects of young people, with illegal drug use by students or their families as a major factor contributing to the incidence of school dropouts; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2007 report by the United States Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, nineteen percent of workers under age twenty-six and more than ten percent of workers age twenty-six to thirty-four used illicit drugs during the past month, illustrating a component in the overall cost of drug use to United States businesses, which is estimated to be one hundred billion dollars annually; and

WHEREAS, persons who remain unemployed due to their inability to pass a pre-employment drug screening cause a significant net loss to the economy of this state and create an entirely avoidable cost to society; and

WHEREAS, the points above are but few examples of the devastating impact of illegal drug use; and

WHEREAS, undertaking a study of the total detriment to Louisiana of illegal drug use would be a challenging endeavor, yet such a study is essential if the public is to understand the true magnitude of this problem in our state; and

WHEREAS, the Drug Policy Board of this state is established in R.S. 49:219.1 et seq. as a body corporate within the office of the governor for the purpose of developing policies for more effectively combating illegal drugs; and

WHEREAS, this body is composed of twenty-three members representing state agencies and other organizations which deal with the myriad ramifications of illegal drug use; and

WHEREAS, R.S. 49:219.1 declares that it is the policy of the state of Louisiana to undertake every responsible effort, explore every opportunity, invite every useful contribution, and expend every available resource to eliminate the abuse of drugs and the damage to people and institutions that result from such abuse; and

WHEREAS, the Drug Policy Board, as the leading entity of this state charged solely with combating illegal drugs, and as a body comprised of members with notable expertise in areas related to illegal drugs, is uniquely positioned to analyze and report to the legislature on the overall impact and cost of illegal drug use.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby authorize and direct the Drug Policy Board to coordinate a study of the overall impact and estimated aggregate costs of illegal drug use in the state of Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in conducting such study, the Drug Policy Board shall obtain and synthesize data, analysis, and commentary on the impact of illegal drug use from each of its member agencies and organizations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Drug Policy Board shall present this study in the form of a report to the House Committee on Health and Welfare and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare on or before March 1, 2012.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the chairman of the Drug Policy Board.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

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