

House Resolution 681

By: Representatives Clark of the 108th and Bazemore of the 63rd

A RESOLUTION

1 Creating the House Study Committee on the Effects of Mental Health on Gun Violence; and
2 for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, the *Behavioral Health Barometer: Georgia, 2015*, report of the Substance
4 Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the United States Department of Health
5 and Human Services found that each year more than 80,000 young people in Georgia
6 between the ages of 12 and 17 years report having a major depressive episode, which is a
7 period of two weeks or longer of having certain symptoms of major depression; and

8 WHEREAS, said report found that more than 60 percent of such young people do not receive
9 treatment for such depression; and

10 WHEREAS, in 2018, Governor Nathan Deal highlighted the need for increased study of
11 mental health through increased investment in the Commission on Children's Mental Health;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, Governor Brian Kemp has noted that helping students with mental health will
14 make schools safer with increased investment in the Georgia Apex Program; and

15 WHEREAS, the National Center for Health Statistics of the Centers for Disease Control and
16 Prevention has found that the suicide rate in Georgia has increased by nearly 30 percent since
17 2005; and

18 WHEREAS, a study in the *Annual Review of Public Health* found that firearms are used in
19 only 6 percent of suicide attempts but account for more than one-half of suicide deaths
20 illustrating the lethality of this method of self-harm; and

21 WHEREAS, a study in the *Annals of Emergency Medicine* found that firearms used in
22 suicide attempts have an 85 percent fatality rate, compared to other methods which have a
23 5 percent fatality rate; and

24 WHEREAS, the National Center for Health Statistics of the Centers for Disease Control and
25 Prevention has found that there were more than 1,600 firearm deaths in Georgia in 2017,
26 which is the 5th highest of any state; and

27 WHEREAS, said Center has found that firearm deaths in Georgia have increased by more
28 than 50 percent since 2005; and

29 WHEREAS, the 2015 *12th Annual Report* of the Fatality Review Project of the Georgia
30 Commission on Family Violence and the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
31 found that 80 percent of domestic violence related deaths in Georgia were caused by
32 firearms; and

33 WHEREAS, according to data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, between 1988 and
34 2016, 136 law enforcement officers were killed while responding to domestic disturbances;
35 and

36 WHEREAS, a 2012 study found that men arrested for domestic violence who met probable
37 diagnostic criteria for mental health issues, including, but not limited to, PTSD, depression,
38 generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social phobia, and alcohol and drug disorders,
39 committed more frequent aggression than those not meeting such criteria; and

40 WHEREAS, to save the lives of thousands of Georgians, including, but not limited to,
41 battered women, vulnerable women and children, and devoted law enforcement officers,
42 further investigation is needed on the effects of mental health on gun violence.

43 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

44 (1) **Creation of House study committee.** There is created the House Study Committee
45 on the Effects of Mental Health on Gun Violence.

46 (2) **Members and officers.** The committee shall be composed of five members of the
47 House of Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of
48 Representatives. The Speaker shall also appoint an additional four nonlegislative
49 members of the committee as follows: one law enforcement officer or professional, one
50 mental health professional, a representative from the Department of Education, and a

51 representative from the Department of Public Health. The Speaker shall designate a
52 member of the committee as chairperson of the committee.

53 (3) **Powers and duties.** The committee shall undertake a study of the conditions, needs,
54 issues, and problems mentioned above or related thereto and recommend any action or
55 legislation which the committee deems necessary or appropriate.

56 (4) **Meetings.** The chairperson shall call all meetings of the committee. The committee
57 may conduct such meetings at such places and at such times as it may deem necessary or
58 convenient to enable it to exercise fully and effectively its powers, perform its duties, and
59 accomplish the objectives and purposes of this resolution.

60 (5) **Allowances, expenses, and funding.**

61 (A) The legislative members of the committee shall receive the allowances provided
62 for in Code Section 28-1-8 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated.

63 (B) Members of the committee who are state officials, other than legislative members,
64 or who are state employees shall receive no compensation for their services on the
65 committee, but they may be reimbursed for expenses incurred by them in the
66 performance of their duties as members of the committee in the same manner as they
67 are reimbursed for expenses in their capacities as state officials or employees.

68 (C) Members of the committee who are not legislators, state officials, or state
69 employees shall receive a daily expense allowance in an amount the same as that
70 specified in subsection (b) of Code Section 45-7-21 of the Official Code of Georgia
71 Annotated, as well as the mileage or transportation allowance authorized for state
72 employees.

73 (D) The allowances authorized by this resolution shall not be received by any member
74 of the committee for more than five days unless additional days are authorized. Funds
75 necessary to carry out the provisions of this resolution shall come from funds
76 appropriated to the House of Representatives; except that funds for the reimbursement
77 of the expenses of state officials, other than legislative members, and for the
78 reimbursement of the expenses of state employees shall come from funds appropriated
79 to or otherwise available to their respective agencies.

80 (6) **Report.**

81 (A) In the event the committee adopts any specific findings or recommendations that
82 include suggestions for proposed legislation, the chairperson shall file a report of the
83 same prior to the date of abolishment specified in this resolution, subject to
84 subparagraph (C) of this paragraph.

85 (B) In the event the committee adopts a report that does not include suggestions for
86 proposed legislation, the chairperson shall file the report, subject to subparagraph (C)
87 of this paragraph.

88 (C) No report shall be filed unless the same has been approved prior to the date of
89 abolishment specified in this resolution by majority vote of a quorum of the committee.
90 A report so approved shall be signed by the chairperson of the committee and filed with
91 the Clerk of the House of Representatives.

92 (D) In the absence of an approved report, the chairperson may file with the Clerk of the
93 House of Representatives a copy of the minutes of the meetings of the committee in lieu
94 thereof.

95 (7) **Abolishment.** The committee shall stand abolished on December 1, 2019.