

By Senator Sears,

Joint resolution urging Vermont's participation in the Stepping Up initiative to reduce the number of incarcerated Vermonters with a mental illness.

Whereas, the Department of Corrections (DOC), in accordance with its Vermont System of Care Plan, uses the term "severe functional impairment" (SFI) to define an inmate who has a serious mental illness, and

Whereas, according to the DOC, approximately 90 Vermont inmates have an SFI designation, and

Whereas, the services that inmates with an SFI designation require from the DOC are greater than those of other inmates, and

Whereas, inmates with an SFI designation may remain in correctional facilities longer and exhibit higher recidivism rates than other inmates, and

Whereas, upon release, inmates that had an SFI designation may need specialized mental health care services, and

Whereas, aside from those inmates with an SFI designation, the DOC reports that approximately 40 percent of the male inmate population and 80 percent of the female inmate population have been treated for a diagnosed mental illness, and

Whereas, these other inmates place an extra service demand on Vermont's correctional and mental health systems, even though diagnosticians would not necessarily characterize these inmates' mental illness as serious, and

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Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Commissioner of Corrections and the Commissioner of Mental Health.