WHEREAS, The Mercury Reduction Oversight Commission has the mission to prevent human sources of mercury from contaminating the environment (air, water, soil); and

WHEREAS, The Mercury Reduction and Education Act passed by the General Assembly in 2001 has declared that mercury is a persistent and toxic pollutant that bioaccumulates in the environment, and mercury deposition has proven to be a significant problem in the northeastern United States; and

WHEREAS, The Mercury Reduction and Education Act prohibits the disposal of mercury-added products by means other than recycling or hazardous waste disposal as of July 2005; and

WHEREAS, Convenience light switches and other auto parts may contain mercury, and therefore pose a threat to human health and the environment if improperly disposed of at the end of their useful life; and

WHEREAS, An estimated 890 pounds of mercury has been released from Rhode Island autos over the past 30 years and an equal amount could be released over the next two decades if action is not taken soon to recover the mercury from vehicles before they are scrapped; and

WHEREAS, The Mercury Reduction and Education Act exempts mercury-added components as contained in motor vehicles from the disposal ban (23-24.9-9) and collection plan (23-24.9-10); and

WHEREAS, The state currently has no system to address the need to collect mercury
WHEREAS, Mercury from auto parts threatens the health of Rhode Islanders, and the Rhode Island Health Department warns young children and pregnant or nursing women not to eat any freshwater fish caught in Rhode Island due to mercury contamination; and

WHEREAS, The state of Maine has successfully implemented a mercury switch collection program which has withstood legal challenges and is effectively collecting mercury-added switches for recycling; and

WHEREAS, An effective mercury product recycling system must be convenient and minimize costs to taxpayers and to consumers; and

WHEREAS, Auto manufacturers should be responsible for ensuring proper handling, recycling and disposal of discarded products and that costs associated with consolidation, handling and recycling be internalized by the manufacturers; and

WHEREAS, A system of producer responsibility for the collection and recycling of mercury-added auto parts is the most effective and equitable means of keeping this toxic waste out of the waste stream and environment, while also providing and a powerful incentive for manufacturers to reduce toxins and re-design products for recycling; and

WHEREAS, Auto manufacturers should have the flexibility to act in partnership with each other, with state, municipal and regional governments and with businesses that provide collection and handling services to develop, implement and promote a safe and effective recycling system for mercury-added auto parts; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations hereby respectfully urges the Mercury Reduction Oversight Commission to develop a plan to address the collection and recycling of mercury added auto parts in a manner that is convenient and minimizes costs to taxpayers and consumers; and

RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations hereby respectfully urges the Mercury Reduction Oversight Commission to submit to the General Assembly no later than January 30, 2005 a recommended plan, including any legislation necessary to implement the plan, for the collection and recycling of mercury-added auto parts that utilizes producer responsibility; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and he hereby is authorized and directed to submit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Chair of the Mercury Reduction Oversight Commission, and all of the commission members.

LC03716