

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 48

Session of
2007

INTRODUCED BY ORIE, COSTA, BOSCOLA, MUSTO, ERICKSON, GREENLEAF,
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MARCH 12, 2007

REFERRED TO AGING AND YOUTH, MARCH 12, 2007

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing youth mental illness and suicide as a public health
2 crisis and encouraging evidence-based initiatives to screen
3 children and adolescents for mental disorders in order to
4 identify illness and prevent suicide among youths.

5 WHEREAS, Over the past 20 years, advances in scientific
6 research have changed the way we think about children's mental
7 health, and we have learned that the same mental disorders that
8 afflict adults can also occur in children and adolescents; and

9 WHEREAS, Scientific research has demonstrated that early
10 identification and treatment of mental disorders in children and
11 adolescents greatly improve the prognosis; and

12 WHEREAS, In January 2001 the Surgeon General of the United
13 States noted that while one in ten youths in the United States
14 suffers from mental illness severe enough to cause some level of
15 impairment, only one in five of these youths receives needed
16 mental health treatment; and

17 WHEREAS, The World Health Organization has reported that
18 youth neuropsychiatric disorders will rise by more than 50% by

1 2020, making these disorders one of the top five causes of
2 disability, morbidity and mortality among children and
3 adolescents; and

4 WHEREAS, Psychological autopsy studies have found that 90% of
5 youths who end their own lives have depression or other
6 diagnosable mental or substance abuse disorders at the time of
7 their deaths, verifying a link between mental illness and
8 suicide; and

9 WHEREAS, In 1999 the Surgeon General of the United States
10 first recognized that mental illness and substance abuse
11 disorders are the greatest risk factors for suicidal behavior
12 and that proper identification and treatment of mental illness
13 and substance abuse disorders are important suicide prevention
14 activities; and

15 WHEREAS, The cost to society of childhood mental disorders is
16 high, in both human and fiscal terms, in that such disorders
17 persist into adulthood, as evidenced by the 2000 Report of the
18 Surgeon General's Conference on Children's Mental Health, which
19 found that 74% of 21 year olds with mental disorders had prior
20 problems; and

21 WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control reported that in
22 2002, suicide was the third leading cause of death for those 10
23 to 24 years of age and the second leading cause for those 25 to
24 34 years of age.

25 WHEREAS, The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
26 Administration has reported that in 1999 almost 3 million youths
27 were at risk for suicide but only 36% received mental health
28 treatment; and

29 WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has
30 reported that each year in the United States almost as many

1 adolescents and young adults commit suicide as die from all
2 natural causes, including leukemia, birth defects, pneumonia and
3 influenza and AIDS, combined; and

4 WHEREAS, In January 2001 the Surgeon General of the United
5 States set a goal to improve the assessment and recognition of
6 mental health needs in children in part by promoting early
7 identification of mental health needs; and

8 WHEREAS, Several states have recognized youth mental illness
9 and suicide as a public health crisis, and a majority of states
10 have developed or are in the process of developing plans to
11 identify mental illness and prevent suicide among youths; and

12 WHEREAS, The efforts, initiatives and activities of the
13 Federal and State Government should be used to support evidence-
14 based practices for identifying mental illness in youths and
15 preventing suicide among this population; therefore be it

16 RESOLVED, That the Senate find that youth mental illness and
17 suicide are a public health crisis and that the Governor, the
18 General Assembly, the Department of Health, the Department of
19 Education, the judiciary and all citizens of this Commonwealth
20 should make the identification of mental disorders and the
21 prevention of suicide among youths a public health priority; and
22 be it further

23 RESOLVED, That the Senate find that every child should be
24 screened for mental illness once in their youth in order to
25 identify mental illness and prevent suicide among youths and
26 that the screening and identification process should employ
27 evidence-based initiatives; and be it further

28 RESOLVED, That the Senate find that all middle school and
29 high school students should have confidential and equal access
30 to these initiatives without stigma.