

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

# HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 701 Session of  
2008

INTRODUCED BY PARKER, COHEN, DALEY, DePASQUALE, FRANKEL, GEORGE,  
HARKINS, HERSHEY, JAMES, JOSEPHS, MANDERINO, McGEEHAN, MYERS,  
OLIVER, PASHINSKI, PAYTON, RAPP, SIPTROTH, THOMAS, WALKO,  
WHEATLEY, YOUNGBLOOD AND D. O'BRIEN, APRIL 7, 2008

INTRODUCED AS NONCONTROVERSIAL RESOLUTION UNDER RULE 35,  
APRIL 7, 2008

## A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing the special needs of children of incarcerated  
2 parents and bringing to attention the need for programs to  
3 help these children.

4 WHEREAS, In the United States, more than 1.5 million children  
5 have a parent who is currently incarcerated; and

6 WHEREAS, Nearly ten million children have experienced having  
7 a parent incarcerated at one point during their childhood; and

8 WHEREAS, Approximately 60% of incarcerated women in this  
9 Commonwealth are mothers of children under 18 years of age; and

10 WHEREAS, Approximately 55% of incarcerated men are fathers of  
11 children under 18 years of age; and

12 WHEREAS, The primary impacts of parental arrest and  
13 incarceration on children are in the areas of economic security  
14 and family stability; and

15 WHEREAS, Parental imprisonment, in particular, can impose  
16 serious financial hardships on an offender's family and can lead  
17 to disrupted living arrangements for the children, both of which

1 are linked to an increased risk for delinquency on the part of  
2 an offender's children; and

3 WHEREAS, Female prisoners who have contact with their  
4 children and who complete family reunification programs, which  
5 reintroduce them in a community-based setting, have lower  
6 recidivism rates than female prisoners without access to their  
7 children or such programs; and

8 WHEREAS, The most commonly stated reasons for low mother-  
9 child visitation rates are cost of transportation and distance  
10 to prisons; and

11 WHEREAS, Incarceration of a parent has been shown to have  
12 adverse effects on a child's sense of security, trust and self-  
13 esteem; and

14 WHEREAS, Children who have incarcerated fathers tend to "act  
15 out," including hostile behavior, use of drugs and alcohol,  
16 truancy and delinquent actions; and

17 WHEREAS, Children who have incarcerated mothers tend to  
18 exhibit "withdrawal" characteristics, such as unwillingness to  
19 engage in play, fear of school, frequent crying and nightmares;  
20 and

21 WHEREAS, Research suggests that the relationships between  
22 mothers and their children profoundly affect how the mothers  
23 function in the prison system; and

24 WHEREAS, Studies show that problem behaviors among  
25 incarcerated women, such as negativism, manipulation, rule-  
26 breaking and fighting, are often a response to the grief, loss,  
27 shame and guilt these women feel regarding their roles as  
28 parents; and

29 WHEREAS, Programs, such as Parents Anonymous and parent  
30 education classes offered by the Pennsylvania Department of

1 Corrections, have been shown to be more cost effective in  
2 increasing the probability of a successful family outcome than  
3 other modalities; and

4 WHEREAS, One in five children of incarcerated mothers  
5 witnessed their mother's arrest, often causing profound trauma  
6 to the child; and

7 WHEREAS, Much more must be learned about the relationship  
8 between incarceration, parenting and the long-term impacts on  
9 children before we can arrive at strong conclusions about how  
10 best to structure parenting programs for prisoners; and

11 WHEREAS, Many incarcerated parents are unaware of their  
12 rights pertaining to their minor children; and

13 WHEREAS, Regardless of the crimes of their parents, these  
14 children still have the same needs, feelings and aspirations as  
15 other children; and

16 WHEREAS, Although their parents may have committed crimes,  
17 these children cannot, should not and must not be held  
18 accountable for the actions of their parents; therefore be it

19 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives recognize the  
20 unique needs that children of incarcerated parents possess,  
21 support the programs that have been created thus far to address  
22 these issues as being vital to these children and encourage  
23 further study of this phenomenon.