

## THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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**HOUSE RESOLUTION****No. 550** Session of  
2013

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INTRODUCED BY HARHAI, GILLESPIE, SCHLOSSBERG, R. MILLER, COHEN, KOTIK, KIRKLAND, HAGGERTY, LUCAS, B. BOYLE, KINSEY, V. BROWN, BROWNLEE, CALTAGIRONE, JAMES, YOUNGBLOOD, BOBACK, BIZZARRO, SCHREIBER, READSHAW, HENNESSEY, SWANGER, DAVIS, MAHONEY, GODSHALL, WHITE, KORTZ, PARKER, GINGRICH, ROSS, MURT, FARINA, REED, CLYMER, MAJOR, GRELL, FLECK, GOODMAN, THOMAS, MCNEILL, DELISSIO, WATSON, SABATINA, SCAVELLO, MCCARTER AND DONATUCCI, NOVEMBER 13, 2013

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AS REPORTED FROM COMMITTEE ON URBAN AFFAIRS, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AS AMENDED, MARCH 11, 2014

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## A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to establish a  
2 bipartisan legislative task force and an advisory committee  
3 to conduct a study of the occurrence, effects and trends of  
4 homelessness in Pennsylvania and to report its findings and  
5 recommendations to the House of Representatives.

6 WHEREAS, Shelter is a basic human need; and

7 WHEREAS, A stable, quality, affordable home promotes family  
8 stability, physical and mental health and enhances both adults'  
9 and children's ability to be productive. Conversely, the lack of  
10 a stable, quality, affordable home increases the risk of  
11 illness, failure at school, inability to find or hold a job,  
12 incarceration and nursing home placement, often at public  
13 expense; and

14 WHEREAS, In 2011, more than 34,000 Pennsylvanians spent at  
15 least one night in an emergency or transitional housing program,  
16 not including those individuals living on the street, under

1 bridges, in parks or sleeping in someone else's house

2 temporarily; and

3 WHEREAS, The National Alliance to End Homelessness reported  
4 an estimated 235,000 Pennsylvanians as living doubled up in  
5 someone else's house temporarily in 2011; and

6 WHEREAS, In Pennsylvania, statistics show that family,  
7 veteran and chronic homelessness have all risen between 2011 and  
8 2012; and

9 WHEREAS, Homeless pregnant mothers are less likely to have  
10 received adequate prenatal care and more likely to be young and  
11 without a high school education; and

12 WHEREAS, Children born to homeless mothers are more likely to  
13 be born prematurely and at a low birth weight. These children  
14 have higher than average rates of chronic health conditions such  
15 as asthma, evidence high rates of chronic ear infections and are  
16 at increased risk for iron-deficiency anemia and lead toxicity;  
17 and

18 WHEREAS, In Pennsylvania, more than 9,400 children spent at  
19 least one night in emergency or transitional housing in 2011,  
20 nearly 60% of whom are less than six years of age; and

21 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania school districts provided services to  
22 20,556 homeless children and youth in 2010-2011; and

23 WHEREAS, For many children, homelessness represents many  
24 risks, including the likelihood of experiencing an array of  
25 health challenges; and

26 WHEREAS, In addition to health-related risks, research  
27 demonstrates that children experiencing homelessness are more  
28 likely to have been exposed to family violence; and

29 WHEREAS, Almost 40% of children served by emergency housing  
30 programs experienced substantiated abuse or neglect and more

1 than 20% had been placed in out-of-home care by the end of the  
2 second grade; and

3 WHEREAS, The effects of childhood homelessness do not end  
4 with childhood. Homeless children experience higher rates of  
5 physical and sexual risk behaviors and are more likely to  
6 partake in illegal substances; and

7 WHEREAS, Homeless children show higher rates of poor mental  
8 health, are less likely to graduate from high school and are  
9 more likely to end up incarcerated; and

10 WHEREAS, The adverse influence of childhood homelessness on  
11 children's health, development and well-being is associated with  
12 short-term and long-term societal costs that far exceed the cost  
13 of providing shelter alone and creates a costly toll on society;  
14 and

15 ~~WHEREAS, Funding for the Homeless Assistance Program in~~ <--  
16 ~~Pennsylvania has decreased by \$8,000,000 since 2008; and~~

17 WHEREAS, The high demand for housing and other causative  
18 factors of homelessness compelled counties in Pennsylvania to  
19 increase their emergency housing units for families by 12% from  
20 2009-2011; therefore be it

21 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission be  
22 directed to establish a bipartisan legislative task force OF <--  
23 FOUR MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES to investigate,  
24 review and make recommendations of the causes and impacts of  
25 homelessness in Pennsylvania; and be it further

26 RESOLVED, THAT THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES <--  
27 AND THE MINORITY LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES EACH  
28 APPOINT TWO MEMBERS OF THE TASK FORCE; AND BE IT FURTHER

29 RESOLVED, That the task force be authorized to hold ~~public~~ <--  
30 ~~hearings~~ INFORMATION SESSIONS, take testimony and conduct site <--

1 visits; and be it further

2 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission oversee  
3 the creation of an advisory committee of no fewer than 13  
4 members to assist the task force in its study and  
5 recommendations; and be it further

6 RESOLVED, That the advisory committee be a bipartisan, broad-  
7 based and geographically diverse representation THAT MAY INCLUDE <--  
8 INDIVIDUALS FROM among the business, faith, community, labor,  
9 local government and human services communities and individuals  
10 affected by poverty; and be it further

11 RESOLVED, That the advisory committee ~~be comprised of at~~ <--  
12 ~~least~~ SHALL INCLUDE ALL OF THE FOLLOWING AS MEMBERS: <--

13 (1) SECRETARY OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, OR  
14 HIS OR HER DESIGNEE;

15 (2) SECRETARY OF CORRECTIONS, OR HIS OR HER DESIGNEE;

16 (3) SECRETARY OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROGRAMS, OR HIS OR  
17 HER DESIGNEE;

18 (4) SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, OR HIS OR HER DESIGNEE;

19 (5) SECRETARY OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY, OR HIS OR HER  
20 DESIGNEE;

21 (6) SECRETARY OF PUBLIC WELFARE, OR HIS OR HER DESIGNEE;

22 (7) CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN  
23 AND FAMILIES, OR HIS OR HER DESIGNEE;

24 (8) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF  
25 THE PENNSYLVANIA HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY, OR HIS OR HER  
26 DESIGNEE;

27 ~~(1)~~ (9) one representative from the executive branch; <--

28 ~~(2)~~ (10) four representatives of agencies that work with <--  
29 homeless Pennsylvanians, with every reasonable effort made to  
30 include diverse homeless populations, such as veterans,

1 people with disabilities, families with children, single  
2 individuals, senior citizens and victims of domestic  
3 violence;

4 ~~(3)~~ (11) individuals from the general public WHO WERE <--  
5 FORMERLY HOMELESS; and

6 ~~(4)~~ (12) two individuals from each of the Southeastern, <--  
7 Northeastern, Central and Western geographic regions of this  
8 Commonwealth;

9 and be it further

10 RESOLVED, That the TASK FORCE, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE <--  
11 advisory committee, examine data, interview individuals and <--  
12 families, ~~survey~~ CONTACT communities through methods decided by <--  
13 the committee and examine successful strategies used in other  
14 states' poverty reduction efforts; and be it further

15 RESOLVED, That additional assistance in this endeavor be  
16 provided by the Urban Affairs Committee of the House of  
17 Representatives; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the ~~task force~~ JOINT STATE GOVERNMENT <--  
19 COMMISSION, with the assistance of the advisory committee:

20 (1) Review other recent studies of homelessness from  
21 around the country.

22 (2) Research and review the cost factor of homelessness  
23 that shall include health care costs, education, mental  
24 health, incarceration rates and other factors.

25 (3) Undertake a comprehensive analysis of Pennsylvania's  
26 homelessness problem to determine what policy  
27 recommendations, if any, would move the Commonwealth toward  
28 permanently reducing and eliminating homelessness.

29 (4) Examine other matters that it deems important;  
30 and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That the task force propose new legislation, if  
2 necessary and appropriate; and be it further

3 ~~RESOLVED, That the task force and advisory committee choose a~~ <--  
4 ~~chairperson from among its members; and be it further~~

5 ~~RESOLVED, That members of the task force and advisory~~  
6 ~~committee serve without compensation, but be reimbursed for~~  
7 ~~necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties,~~  
8 ~~within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made~~  
9 ~~available to the task force and advisory committee for their~~  
10 ~~purposes. All members of the task force or advisory committee~~  
11 ~~who are duly elected members of the General Assembly shall~~  
12 ~~remain members of the task force or advisory committee until~~  
13 ~~they report their findings and recommendations to the House of~~  
14 ~~Representatives; and be it further~~

15 RESOLVED, THAT THE TASK FORCE SELECT A CHAIRMAN AND SUCH <--  
16 OTHER OFFICERS AS THE TASK FORCE MAY DEEM NECESSARY FROM AMONG  
17 ITS MEMBERSHIP; AND BE IT FURTHER

18 RESOLVED, THAT THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHOOSE A CHAIRPERSON  
19 FROM AMONG ITS MEMBERS; AND BE IT FURTHER

20 RESOLVED, That all State, county and municipal agencies,  
21 departments, boards, bureaus and commissions cooperate fully  
22 with the task force and advisory committee; and be it further

23 RESOLVED, That the task force ~~and advisory committee~~ report <--  
24 ~~their~~ ITS findings and recommendations to the House of <--  
25 Representatives no later than two years after the adoption of  
26 this resolution.