
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 318 Session of
2019

INTRODUCED BY ZABEL, HILL-EVANS, CALTAGIRONE, KINSEY,
SCHLOSSBERG, RABB, JOHNSON-HARRELL, FRANKEL, McNEILL,
HOHENSTEIN, T. DAVIS, HELM, KENYATTA, WILLIAMS, EVERETT,
MADDEN, McCLINTON, VITALI, SHUSTERMAN, BURNS, STURLA, MULLINS
AND MALAGARI, MAY 8, 2019

INTRODUCED AS NONCONTROVERSIAL RESOLUTION UNDER RULE 35,
MAY 8, 2019

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing the 10th anniversary of the Pennsylvania Innocence
2 Project and its efforts to free the convicted innocent.

3 WHEREAS, Since the Pennsylvania Innocence Project opened its
4 doors in 2009, it has focused on identifying and exonerating
5 those convicted of crimes they did not commit; and

6 WHEREAS, In that time, the Pennsylvania Innocence Project
7 office has grown from two paid staff members to nine and
8 expanded from a single office with Temple University's Beasley
9 School of Law to an additional office at Duquesne University
10 School of Law in Pittsburgh; and

11 WHEREAS, By engaging hundreds of lawyers, law students,
12 undergraduate students and community members all over this
13 Commonwealth, this Statewide organization has reversed 14
14 wrongful convictions; and

15 WHEREAS, In doing so, Pennsylvania Innocence Project staff
16 and volunteers have prevented their clients, who have so far

1 served a combined total of 415 years in prison, from spending
2 another minute locked away from their lives and society for
3 crimes they did not commit; and

4 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania Innocence Project staff and pro bono
5 partners are currently litigating more than 22 cases for
6 individuals who have strong claims of innocence all over this
7 Commonwealth; and

8 WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania Innocence Project also works toward
9 criminal justice reform by educating stakeholders on the reasons
10 for wrongful convictions; and

11 WHEREAS, According to the Pennsylvania Innocence Project,
12 factors leading to wrongful convictions include eyewitness
13 misidentifications (72% of all exonerations), unvalidated and
14 improper forensic evidence (50% of all cases), false
15 "confessions" and incriminating statements (25% of all cases)
16 and false informant or incentivized witness testimony (19% of
17 all cases); and

18 WHEREAS, As a result of wrongful convictions, nationwide 82
19 sexual assaults and 35 murders were committed by true
20 perpetrators while the innocent individuals remained in jail;
21 and

22 WHEREAS, To prevent this, the Pennsylvania Innocence Project
23 works directly with law enforcement agencies to encourage
24 training in and adoption of best practices for eyewitness
25 identification and suspect interrogation recording procedures;
26 and

27 WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania Innocence Project also provides
28 support, training and guidance to lawyers litigating
29 postconviction claims of innocence; and

30 WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania Innocence Project seeks to prepare

tomorrow's criminal justice professionals by providing clinical training and experience to students in the fields of law, journalism, criminal justice and forensic science; and

WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania Innocence Project has also established programs in law schools throughout this Commonwealth, including the Temple University Beasley School of Law, Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law, Drexel University Thomas R. Kline School of Law, University of Pennsylvania Law School, Penn State Law School, Penn State Dickinson Law School, University of Pittsburgh School of Law and Duquesne University School of Law; and

WHEREAS, In addition to collaborating with today's stakeholders and educating tomorrow's, the Pennsylvania Innocence Project allows convicted individuals a fair chance of having evidence of their innocence presented in court by advocating for updates to Pennsylvania's postconviction laws; and

WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania Innocence Project continues to advocate for policies that provide just compensation for victims of wrongful conviction, extend the time inmates must file a petition after finding evidence of innocence, allow prisoners to request DNA testing in appropriate cases and require accreditation of forensic science laboratories; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives recognize the 10th anniversary of the Pennsylvania Innocence Project and its efforts to free the convicted innocent; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives commend the work that the Pennsylvania Innocence Project has done over the past 10 years to restore peace and justice to the convicted innocent and prevent injustice through its impressive efforts to reform

1 the criminal justice system.