A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to study
2 evictions and eviction moratoriums and their impact on
3 health, well-being and mortality during the COVID-19
4 pandemic.

5 WHEREAS, On March 18, 2020, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court
6 issued an eviction and foreclosure moratorium and subsequently
7 extended that moratorium until it expired on June 1, 2020; and
8 WHEREAS, Governor Wolf signed an executive order that would
9 place a moratorium on new eviction and foreclosure filings from
10 May 7, 2020, to July 9, 2020, and the executive order was later
11 extended to August 31, 2020; and
12 WHEREAS, On September 4, 2020, the Centers for Disease
13 Control and Prevention (CDC) issued an Order under Section 361
14 of the Public Health Service Act to temporarily halt certain
15 residential evictions to prevent the further spread of COVID-19
16 between September 4, 2020, and December 31, 2020; and
17 WHEREAS, On December 28, 2020, President Trump signed the
18 Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, which extended the CDC
temporary halt on residential evictions through January 31, 2021; and

WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention moratorium was extended until June 30, 2021; and

WHEREAS, On August 3, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced a new order from President Biden imposing a 60-day Federal moratorium on evictions due to the high rate of transmission of the COVID-19 Delta strain to end on October 3, 2021; and

WHEREAS, The United States Supreme Court ended the eviction moratorium extension on August 26, 2021, when it rejected the moratorium on the grounds that such a moratorium must be specifically authorized by the United States Congress; and

WHEREAS, Between March 15, 2020, and July 31, 2021, the Department of Labor and Industry received 2,479,835 unemployment compensation claims; and

WHEREAS, Millions of Pennsylvanians experienced unemployment, are currently unemployed or are experiencing underemployment, which is drastically affecting their ability to pay rent, mortgages and other life-sustaining bills; and

WHEREAS, According to the October 2021 Census Pulse Survey, 840,564 Pennsylvania households have either missed last month's rent or mortgage payment or do not have confidence that they can make next month's payment on time; and

WHEREAS, Thousands of Pennsylvanians have utility accounts that are past due and have few options at bringing them current; and

WHEREAS, As of October 15, 2021, this Commonwealth ranks 38th in cases and 40th in deaths in the United States from COVID-19, but has been as high as 7th in the nation; and
WHEREAS, This Commonwealth is facing a massive eviction event that would drastically increase the number of homeless Pennsylvanians, and thousands of families would face the uncertainty of housing insecurity; and

WHEREAS, Numerous studies have documented a link between evictions and increased COVID-19 infections and mortality, with one such study finding at least one COVID-19 death for every 60 evictions; and

WHEREAS, With rising COVID-19 cases and the eviction moratorium ending, millions of Pennsylvanians could be at risk for illness or death; and

WHEREAS, Numerous reports have shown that housing displacement and eviction prevention can be a key component of a comprehensive strategy to control the pandemic by reducing COVID-19 infection, transmission, illness, hospitalizations and death and to address health inequity; and

WHEREAS, Reliable eviction information is needed as Pennsylvania continues to deal with this crisis and to lessen the impact of future crises in urban, suburban and rural areas of this Commonwealth; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the Joint State Government Commission to study evictions and eviction moratoriums and their impact on health, well-being and mortality during the COVID-19 pandemic; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission study how Federal eviction and foreclosure moratorium policies, potential changes to the Landlord and Tenant Act to protect tenants during a declared disaster emergency, municipal ordinances or other local temporary policies have impacted tenants, landlords, public utilities, the courts and municipal
governments during the COVID-19 pandemic; and be it further
RESOLVED, That the study include recommendations to examine
the impact that evictions have on people of color, women,
families with children, people with disabilities and other
populations that could be disproportionately impacted by
evictions; and be it further
RESOLVED, That the study include reporting on the public
health impacts of the housing crisis and how it is affected by
COVID-19-related evictions; and be it further
RESOLVED, That the study include recommendations to the
General Assembly on changes to law that could decrease the
number of evictions in this Commonwealth, mitigate the impact of
evictions and ensure that Pennsylvanians have adequate housing
during the COVID-19 pandemic and future emergencies; and be it
further
RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission issue a
report with its findings and recommendations within three months
of the passage of this resolution to all of the following:
(1) the Urban Affairs and Housing Committee of the
Senate;
(2) the Urban Affairs Committee of the House of
Representatives;
(3) the Judiciary Committee of the Senate; and
(4) the Judiciary Committee of the House of
Representatives;
and be it further
RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission solicit
input from representatives of all aspects of the housing sector
to assist the Joint State Government Commission with its
findings and recommendations in the report.