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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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# SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 210      Session of  
2005

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INTRODUCED BY CORMAN, HUGHES, WONDERLING, ERICKSON, MELLOW,  
COSTA, CONTI, WENGER, WOZNIAK, KITCHEN, BROWNE, TARTAGLIONE,  
GREENLEAF, FERLO, MUSTO, PILEGGI, LEMMOND, FONTANA, BOSCOLA,  
ROBBINS, ARMSTRONG, STACK, KASUNIC, PUNT, D. WHITE,  
C. WILLIAMS, STOUT, MADIGAN, THOMPSON, O'PAKE, PIPPY,  
RAFFERTY AND ORIE, DECEMBER 14, 2005

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INTRODUCED AND ADOPTED, DECEMBER 14, 2005

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## A RESOLUTION

1 Congratulating the Pennsylvania Department of Health on the  
2 occasion of the 100th anniversary of its founding and  
3 recognizing the Department of Health's centennial celebration  
4 from April 27, 2005, through April 26, 2006.

5 WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania Department of Health was created by  
6 Act 312 of 1905, enacted April 27, 1905, to protect the health  
7 of all Commonwealth citizens through close partnerships with  
8 local health agencies in cities, counties and municipalities,  
9 and Act 312 of 1905 has subsequently been modified through The  
10 Administrative Code of 1929, granting the department authority  
11 to enforce all statutes pertaining to public health for the  
12 prevention and suppression of disease and injury; and

13 WHEREAS, Samuel G. Dixon, M.D., LL.D., Sc.D., was the first  
14 Commissioner of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,  
15 serving from 1905 until his death in 1918, and his knowledge of  
16 medicine, allied sciences and law, in addition to his keen mind,

1 common sense, diplomacy and humanitarianism, uniquely qualified  
2 him to serve as commissioner; and

3 WHEREAS, The Bureau of Vital Statistics was created through  
4 Act 330 of 1905, which granted the commissioner supervision over  
5 the registration of births, deaths, marriages and reportable  
6 diseases; within the first eight years, the Bureau of Vital  
7 Statistics recorded more than 1.5 million birth certificates,  
8 900,000 death certificates and 490,000 marriage certificates and  
9 more than 1 million cases of communicable diseases; there are  
10 currently more than 19 million birth records and more than 12.2  
11 million death records filed in the Division of Vital Records;  
12 and

13 WHEREAS, Seven additional divisions were established in 1905:  
14 Medical Inspectors; Sanitary Engineering; Laboratories;  
15 Distribution of Immunizing Agents; Tuberculosis Sanatoria and  
16 Dispensaries; Purchasing, Auditing and Accounting; and  
17 Distribution of Supplies; and

18 WHEREAS, The Division of Child Hygiene, organized in 1918,  
19 made substantial changes to both rural and metropolitan  
20 communities in the medical evaluation and supervision of  
21 sanitary conditions among children in schools and, by its  
22 creation, effectively emphasized the role of school nurses; and

23 WHEREAS, The Bureau of Public Health Nurses was created in  
24 1920 under the direction of Alice O'Halloran, RN, who served as  
25 Chief Dispensing Nurse in the department from 1905 until her  
26 retirement in 1954, and at a time when the spread of disease and  
27 infection such as poliomyelitis, diphtheria and smallpox was on  
28 the rise, the Bureau of Public Health Nurses emphasized disease  
29 prevention by teaching households about sanitation and personal  
30 hygiene and providing for child health and tuberculosis clinics,

1 immunizations and medical advice; these activities have served  
2 as a catalyst for today's public health infrastructure under the  
3 department's Bureau of Community Health Systems; and

4 WHEREAS, The Bureau of Child and Maternal Health was created  
5 in 1920 primarily to supervise medical evaluations in schools,  
6 including dental hygiene, and implemented the Statewide campaign  
7 against diphtheria in 1921; and

8 WHEREAS, In 1920 Pennsylvania was the first state to  
9 recognize dental hygiene as an important component of a healthy  
10 lifestyle when the Department of Health established the Bureau  
11 of Dental Health; and

12 WHEREAS, The Bureau of Field Inspection was organized in 1929  
13 to maintain relations between field staff and Harrisburg staff,  
14 obtain birth and marriage certificates not already forwarded to  
15 Harrisburg, enforce quarantine laws and assist in local  
16 emergencies; the Bureau of Field Inspection reported more than  
17 10,000 unreported births and prosecuted 15 physicians for  
18 failure to report cases of communicable diseases; and

19 WHEREAS, On January 17, 1935, Dr. Edith MacBride-Dexter was  
20 appointed by Governor Howard Earle as the first, and only,  
21 female Secretary of Health in this Commonwealth; during her  
22 administration, through 1939, Dr. MacBride-Dexter was  
23 instrumental in the development of the first Statewide diabetes  
24 and cancer control plans; and

25 WHEREAS, The Social Security Act of 1935 broadened the  
26 Department of Health's tasks to include extensive screening  
27 programs and the use of health care facilities and services; and

28 WHEREAS, In 1937 the Division of Industrial Hygiene was  
29 transferred from the Department of Labor and Industry to the  
30 Department of Health; and

1       WHEREAS, In 1974 the Division of Vital Records was relocated  
2 from Harrisburg to New Castle in Lawrence County to bring more  
3 State jobs to economically depressed areas, and in 1979  
4 Pennsylvania began issuing computer-generated certified copies  
5 of birth records and one free complimentary birth record to  
6 parents of newborns; and

7       WHEREAS, Since its inception in 1974, the Pennsylvania Women,  
8 Infants, and Children Program (WIC) has provided food, education  
9 and referrals to improve the long-term nutrition and health of  
10 63,300,899 women, infants and children in this Commonwealth,  
11 resulting in healthier birth outcomes, lower anemia rates,  
12 increased awareness and support of breastfeeding, and education  
13 to families on healthier eating habits to prevent obesity; and

14       WHEREAS, In 1978, Executive Order 1978-16 was signed,  
15 establishing the nation's first State Center for Health  
16 Statistics in the Department of Health; and

17       WHEREAS, The Governor's Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse was  
18 transferred from the Governor's Office to the Department of  
19 Health by Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1981, under which the  
20 council became advisory to the Secretary of Health on issues  
21 relevant to drug and alcohol abuse; and

22       WHEREAS, Hospital reporting to the Pennsylvania Cancer  
23 Registry was initiated in 1982 and became fully operational  
24 Statewide in 1985; and

25       WHEREAS, The Federal High Blood Pressure Control Program  
26 expanded in 1988 to include cholesterol screening and education  
27 on risk factors for heart disease and stroke and has served as  
28 the basis for the Department of Health's Heart Disease and  
29 Stroke Program; and

30       WHEREAS, The Commonwealth's Behavioral Risk Factor

1 Surveillance System telephone survey, first conducted in 1989,  
2 continues to be conducted annually; the survey provides useful  
3 baseline information on Pennsylvania's citizens 18 years of age  
4 and older on the prevalence of smoking, overweight, cancer  
5 screening and many other health behaviors; and

6 WHEREAS, Act 113 of 1992 established the Primary Health Care  
7 Practitioner Program to develop a comprehensive program to  
8 support the supply and distribution of primary care  
9 practitioners and since the inception of Act 113, the Department  
10 of Health has created robust initiatives, such as the Primary  
11 Care Practitioner Loan Repayment, J-1 Visa Waiver Program,  
12 National Interest Waiver and Community Challenge Grants for  
13 Clinic Development, to assist recruitment and retention of  
14 physicians and dentists in rural and urban underserved areas;  
15 and

16 WHEREAS, Since 1993 the Department of Health's Healthy Woman  
17 Program has screened 43,134 women for breast cancer and cervical  
18 cancer and has provided diagnostic tests and referral for  
19 treatment to 1,023 women diagnosed with breast cancer and 57  
20 women diagnosed with cervical cancer; and

21 WHEREAS, In 1995 the Department of Health implemented a  
22 system to allow hospitals to electronically file birth  
23 certificates, and today all hospitals and several birthing  
24 centers in this Commonwealth use the system as an efficient,  
25 time-saving method for registering births; and

26 WHEREAS, In 1998 the Bureau of Health Statistics and Research  
27 first released statistical aggregate information via the  
28 Internet on the Department of Health's website, and in 2003 the  
29 Bureau of Health Statistics and Research implemented an  
30 interactive health statistics Internet tool, the Epidemiologic

1 Query and Mapping System (EpiQMS), to assist health data users  
2 to better obtain useful health statistical information; and

3 WHEREAS, Act 77 of 2001 authorized the Department of Health  
4 to establish the Commonwealth Universal Research Enhancement  
5 Program (CURE), which awards more than \$50 million each year in  
6 grants to Pennsylvania research institutions for health services  
7 and for clinical and biomedical research projects; and

8 WHEREAS, In 2001 the Department of Health began a Statewide  
9 Immunization Information System to ensure that all children in  
10 this Commonwealth receive adequate protection against vaccine-  
11 preventable disease; and

12 WHEREAS, In 2001 the Department of Health initiated an  
13 unprecedented partnership to develop and implement the first-  
14 ever Pennsylvania Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan to reduce  
15 the burden of cancer in this Commonwealth; the plan was released  
16 in December 2003 and serves as a Statewide blueprint for all  
17 sectors of Pennsylvania to work together against the growing  
18 challenge of cancer; and

19 WHEREAS, In 2002 the Department of Health began a partnership  
20 with the University of Pittsburgh to conduct research in  
21 biomedical informatics, including further development of the  
22 electronic surveillance system known as the Real-Time Outbreak  
23 and Disease Surveillance System (RODS), which permits real-time  
24 analysis of symptom data from emergency departments through  
25 geographical information system (GIS) mapping and provides  
26 alerts to designated public health officials; and

27 WHEREAS, On November 16, 2003, the Department of Health  
28 initiated a cornerstone in bioterrorism preparedness and  
29 response through implementation of the Pennsylvania National  
30 Electronic Disease Surveillance System (PA-NEDSS), which

1 improves the timeliness and accuracy of disease reporting and  
2 expands the public health infrastructure for response to  
3 possible bioterrorism attacks, and the department received the  
4 2005 Davies Award of Excellence recognizing "a public health  
5 program which improves the health of a defined community through  
6 health information and management for PA-NEDSS"; and

7 WHEREAS, The Department of Health released its first  
8 Arthritis Burden Report and Pennsylvania Osteoporosis Prevention  
9 and Education Strategic Plan in 2004 to improve outreach,  
10 education and response efforts to arthritis and osteoporosis  
11 health needs; and

12 WHEREAS, In September 2004 the Department of Health was one  
13 of five states in the nation to be awarded a five-year grant  
14 from the United States Department of Health and Human Services  
15 under the Steps to a HealthierUS initiative, a community-based  
16 effort to reduce the burden of asthma, diabetes and obesity by  
17 focusing on modifiable risk factors--poor nutrition, physical  
18 inactivity and tobacco use--in Fayette, Luzerne and Tioga  
19 Counties; and

20 WHEREAS, In 2004 the Department of Health joined four other  
21 Commonwealth agencies (the Department of Aging, the Insurance  
22 Department, the Department of Public Welfare and the Department  
23 of General Services) to establish the Health and Human Services  
24 Call Center, which provides services for all different age  
25 groups within the family, from infancy to elderly parent, and  
26 responds to their needs through 15 health and human services  
27 programs on eight toll-free lines; since its inception, the  
28 Health and Human Services Call Center has received more than  
29 89,000 calls; and

30 WHEREAS, Over the past 100 years, the Department of Health's

1 primary responsibilities have expanded from protecting the  
2 safety of water and natural resources, maintaining vital records  
3 and controlling communicable diseases to fulfilling a wide range  
4 of health education, promotion and protection activities today;  
5 and

6 WHEREAS, The current mission of the Department of Health is  
7 to promote healthy lifestyles, prevent injury and disease and  
8 assure the safe delivery of quality health care services for all  
9 Pennsylvanians; therefore be it

10 RESOLVED, That the Senate congratulate the Pennsylvania  
11 Department of Health on the centennial celebration of its  
12 founding and recognize the department for its everyday work  
13 protecting and promoting the health of citizens in every corner  
14 of this Commonwealth.