
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 331 Session of
2017

INTRODUCED BY HANNA, ROEBUCK, STURLA, LONGIETTI, KINSEY,
CALTAGIRONE, BRIGGS, J. HARRIS, SCHLOSSBERG, THOMAS, DAVIS,
V. BROWN, WHEATLEY, MILLARD, D. COSTA, D. MILLER, O'BRIEN,
SIMS, HILL-EVANS, MURT AND DONATUCCI, MAY 11, 2017

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, MAY 11, 2017

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to
2 conduct a study and issue a report relating to the long-term
3 sustainability and viability of our public institutions of
4 higher education.

5 WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has a diverse array
6 of institutions of higher education with a variety of missions
7 and strengths; and

8 WHEREAS, For the purposes of this resolution, public
9 institutions of higher education that receive public funds
10 include the 14 universities of the Pennsylvania State System of
11 Higher Education (PASSHE), 14 community colleges, the Thaddeus
12 Stevens College of Technology, the Rural Regional College of
13 Northern Pennsylvania, the Allegany College of Maryland and four
14 State-related universities; and

15 WHEREAS, The Commonwealth established PASSHE for the purpose
16 of providing high-quality education at the lowest possible cost
17 to its students; and

18 WHEREAS, There are 14 community colleges in Pennsylvania that

1 offer a wide array of degree, nondegree and work force
2 development programs and training; and

3 WHEREAS, The Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology is a
4 State-owned two-year technical college focused on the technical
5 work force needs of this Commonwealth, with a special emphasis
6 on supporting under-resourced students; and

7 WHEREAS, The act of July 10, 2014 (P.L.1053, No.126),
8 provided for the establishment of the Rural Regional College of
9 Northern Pennsylvania, which offers two-year associate degrees
10 as well as training and certificate programs to underserved
11 areas of this Commonwealth; and

12 WHEREAS, The Allegany College of Maryland is a community
13 college with its main campus in Maryland's Allegany County and
14 branch locations in Pennsylvania's Bedford and Somerset
15 Counties; and

16 WHEREAS, The Commonwealth conferred State-related status on
17 four universities: The Pennsylvania State University, the
18 University of Pittsburgh, Temple University and Lincoln
19 University; and

20 WHEREAS, Higher education is a critical mechanism for
21 socioeconomic advancement among aspiring individuals and an
22 important driver of economic mobility in our society. Moreover,
23 a well-educated work force is vital to our future economic
24 growth; and

25 WHEREAS, Higher education institutions contribute to the
26 quality of life in their communities, providing services such as
27 medical facilities, research centers, libraries, sports, art and
28 cultural events; and

29 WHEREAS, In many parts of this Commonwealth, these
30 institutions account for a significant portion of local economic

1 activity; and

2 WHEREAS, Higher education institutions also act as catalysts
3 for economic growth; and

4 WHEREAS, All residents of this Commonwealth benefit from the
5 skills and education gained by students at our institutions of
6 higher education; and

7 WHEREAS, To secure these benefits for its residents, the
8 Commonwealth invests significant public resources to support
9 these institutions; and

10 WHEREAS, To maximize these benefits for residents, the
11 Commonwealth should continue to partner with the institutions to
12 promote greater accessibility, affordability and usability of
13 postsecondary education in this Commonwealth; and

14 WHEREAS, To significantly increase the number of individuals
15 in this Commonwealth who hold an associate degree or higher, the
16 Council of Higher Education unanimously supported the adoption
17 of a 60% postsecondary attainment goal by 2025; and

18 WHEREAS, The future of this Commonwealth depends in part on
19 the ability of public and private institutions of higher
20 education to continue to fulfill their missions; therefore be it

21 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the
22 Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct a study and
23 issue a report relating to the long-term sustainability and
24 viability of this Commonwealth's public institutions of higher
25 education; and be it further

26 RESOLVED, That the study include a detailed assessment of:

27 (1) projected revenue and expenses, including long-term
28 debt and the current and projected cost and funding status of
29 health and pension benefits for at least the next five years;

30 (2) college affordability, including the effect on

1 enrollment trends over the next five years. A study of
2 college affordability should take into account the costs and
3 fees levied on students who attend traditional classes and on
4 students who take online courses;

5 (3) the potential for improved efficiencies and overall
6 cost reductions between the public higher education
7 institutions, including an analysis of shared services or
8 potential savings;

9 (4) shared governance, including a review of the powers
10 and duties of the Office of the Chancellor of the State
11 System of Higher Education, the Board of Governors of the
12 State System of Higher Education, the university presidents,
13 the councils of trustees and other PASSHE entities;

14 (5) current and future infrastructure needs at all of
15 our public institutions of higher education, including
16 academic buildings, residence halls and other student-
17 financed buildings, as well as a review of deferred
18 maintenance projects and future information technology needs;

19 (6) the contributions made by any affiliates,
20 subsidiaries, foundations, local sponsors or other entities;

21 (7) the adequacy of State support for institutions of
22 higher education;

23 (8) best practices undertaken by policymakers in other
24 states to address enrollment and fiscal pressures in public
25 higher education;

26 (9) the current higher education landscape in this
27 Commonwealth, which should include an analysis of current
28 efforts by institutions of higher education to improve
29 financial literacy as it relates to the costs associated with
30 the attainment of an associate degree or higher; and

1 (10) the economic impact of institutions of higher
2 education on their communities;
3 and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
5 identify and review long-term critical issues that could
6 threaten the sustainability and viability of our public
7 institutions of higher education, including current policies,
8 procedures, regulations and legislation; and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
10 identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration with basic
11 education, work force development programs, economic development
12 and other related systems; and be it further

13 RESOLVED, That the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance
14 Agency (PHEAA), using data from the most recent year available,
15 provide a list to the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
16 of all public and private institutions with students who receive
17 grant money from PHEAA and the grant amounts awarded to each
18 institution; and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee,
20 in compiling its report, seek input from PASSHE, the Board of
21 Governors of the State System of Higher Education, the Office of
22 the Chancellor of the State System of Higher Education, the
23 councils of trustees, the boards of trustees, the presidents of
24 the universities and colleges, faculty, alumni, business
25 leaders, students, the Pennsylvania Commission for Community
26 Colleges, PHEAA, the Department of Education and any individual
27 who may have relevant information; and be it further

28 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
29 issue its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly
30 within 24 months of the adoption of this resolution.