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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 642 Session of 2019

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INTRODUCED BY McNEILL, READSHAW, DELOZIER, MOUL, KINSEY, HILL-  
EVANS, YOUNGBLOOD, RYAN, MURT, SCHLOSSBERG, FREEMAN, DELLOSO,  
FITZGERALD, KENYATTA, DeLUCA, COMITTA, HOWARD, ISAACSON,  
SAPPEY, MERSKI, THOMAS, HARKINS, ULLMAN, OTTEN, McCLINTON,  
SHUSTERMAN, O'MARA, T. DAVIS, DONATUCCI, FRANKEL, NEILSON,  
MULLINS, PASHINSKI, RABB, MADDEN, SIMS, HANBIDGE, JOHNSON-  
HARRELL, KOSIEROWSKI, KRUEGER, KIRKLAND, DALEY, GILLEN,  
SCHWEYER, DRISCOLL, BOBACK, JAMES, MARKOSEK, RAVENSTAHL AND  
KORTZ, DECEMBER 16, 2019

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, DECEMBER 16, 2019

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A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a  
2 study on the shortcomings of mental health services available  
3 to victims of sexual assault and rape in this Commonwealth  
4 and how mental health services can be improved.

5 WHEREAS, The damaging and traumatic effects of sexual assault  
6 and rape permeate through our culture, stripping thousands of  
7 individuals of their dignity and safety; and

8 WHEREAS, There are more than 430,000 victims who report  
9 sexual assault and rape each year in the United States, with 570  
10 people reporting sexual assault or rape daily; and

11 WHEREAS, Ninety percent of victims who report sexual assault  
12 or rape are women, while three percent of men have been raped or  
13 assaulted at some point in their lifetime; and

14 WHEREAS, Every 73 seconds an American is sexually assaulted,  
15 making it one of the most urgent public health crises our nation

1 faces today; and

2 WHEREAS, Many survivors live in silence, as 63% of victims  
3 never report their suffering for fear of negative public  
4 perception or retaliation; and

5 WHEREAS, Sexual assault and rape survivors often experience a  
6 detrimental and severe impact on their mental health, causing  
7 the individual to feel deep shame and to believe they are alone  
8 or worthless; and

9 WHEREAS, Ninety-four percent of female survivors experience  
10 symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) within the  
11 first two weeks following the event and 30% will continue to  
12 suffer from PTSD symptoms after nine months; and

13 WHEREAS, Survivors often report feelings of hopelessness,  
14 isolation and self-doubt or blame; and

15 WHEREAS, Depression and anxiety are common results of sexual  
16 assault or rape, which can lead to a spiraling decline in the  
17 survivor's mental health; and

18 WHEREAS, Thirty-three percent of women who survive rape  
19 contemplate suicide, with 13% following through with an attempt  
20 to end their lives; and

21 WHEREAS, The average national annual cost associated with  
22 sexual assault and rape is \$127 billion, more than any other  
23 crime, including almost double the cost associated with  
24 homicide; and

25 WHEREAS, Individual costs associated with sexual assault or  
26 rape can total as high as \$120,000 over a lifetime; and

27 WHEREAS, An overwhelming disconnect appears for survivors  
28 attempting to access mental health care to handle the emotional  
29 distress many struggle with after their trauma; and

30 WHEREAS, For the many victims who do not report sexual

1 assault or rape, some feel as though they cannot disclose their  
2 pain to a mental health care provider; and

3 WHEREAS, For the victims who do come forward to seek mental  
4 health services, a confusing and ambiguous process in how to  
5 reach local providers may require victims to recount their  
6 painful trauma multiple times before finding a match; and

7 WHEREAS, Victims find it challenging to locate a mental  
8 health care provider who has expertise and experience in  
9 treating victims of sexual assault and rape and may be deterred  
10 by the challenge; and

11 WHEREAS, Though states receive Federal funding to support  
12 victims, mental health services can be financially burdensome  
13 and should not be a barrier for individuals seeking help after  
14 sexual assault and rape; and

15 WHEREAS, It is imperative that victims feel supported and are  
16 aware of their options when it comes to their mental health and  
17 healing; and

18 WHEREAS, The Commonwealth has a moral obligation to ensure  
19 reliable access to mental health services for victims of rape  
20 and sexual assault, regardless of their gender, age or ability  
21 to pay; and

22 WHEREAS, In a country that has consistently failed the  
23 survivors of sexual assault and rape, it is time that the  
24 Commonwealth strengthen its efforts and address the gaps in  
25 mental health services provided to these brave and strong  
26 individuals; therefore be it

27 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the Joint  
28 State Government Commission to conduct a study on the  
29 shortcomings of mental health services available to victims of  
30 sexual assault and rape in this Commonwealth and how mental

1 health services can be improved; and be it further

2 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission prepare  
3 a report of its findings that shall, at a minimum:

4 (1) Identify the factors that deter victims from seeking  
5 mental health services.

6 (2) Identify the sources of funding for mental health  
7 services, including the Victims Compensation Assistance  
8 Program, and how they could be better advertised and  
9 utilized.

10 (3) Determine how resources such as telephone hotlines  
11 could be better structured to result in a more streamlined  
12 process in connecting the caller with their local mental  
13 health care providers.

14 (4) Determine how services such as telemedicine could be  
15 implemented to bridge the gap in the mental health care  
16 provider shortage.

17 (5) Determine whether a nationally accepted  
18 certification for mental health care providers would be  
19 appropriate to assist victims in finding a provider who has  
20 experience in treating individuals who present with sexual  
21 assault or rape trauma.

22 (6) Make recommendations regarding:

23 (i) How to best connect victims who report to  
24 hospitals for sexual assault examinations with mental  
25 health services materials prior to leaving the hospital.

26 (ii) Any other solutions to better serve victims of  
27 sexual assault and rape who are seeking mental health  
28 treatment;

29 and be it further

30 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission submit

1 its report to the House of Representatives no later than one  
2 year after the adoption of this resolution.