

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 1731 Session of 2021

INTRODUCED BY MIZGORSKI, HENNESSEY, HERSHEY, JONES, B. MILLER, ROTHMAN, RYAN, ZIMMERMAN, HILL-EVANS, JOZWIAK, STAATS, RADER, T. DAVIS, A. DAVIS AND GAINNEY, JULY 20, 2021

AS REPORTED FROM COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AS AMENDED, APRIL 11, 2022

AN ACT

1 Establishing the Pennsylvania Advisory Committee on Greater
2 Father Involvement within the Joint State Government
3 Commission and providing for its powers and duties.

4 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
5 hereby enacts as follows:

6 Section 1. Short title.

7 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Greater
8 Father Involvement Act.

9 Section 2. Definitions.

10 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
11 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
12 context clearly indicates otherwise:

13 "Commission." The Joint State Government Commission.

14 "Committee." The Pennsylvania Advisory Committee on Greater
15 Father Involvement.

16 Section 3. Findings and declaration of policy.

17 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

1 (1) Fathers are role models, caretakers, providers and
2 advocates. Research shows that father involvement is
3 associated with better outcomes for child well-being.

4 (2) When a child has the benefit of access to both
5 parents, the child is more likely to exhibit healthy
6 behaviors, excel in school and achieve emotional well-being.

7 (3) Fathers should be fully present and engaged in
8 providing the emotional, social, physical, intellectual,
9 spiritual and financial contributions that their children
10 need to ensure safety, stability and well-being.

11 (4) Father involvement is a protective factor for
12 children that aids in the development of resilience and
13 mitigates certain psychological and social risks in
14 adulthood.

15 (5) Approximately 24,000,000 of the nation's children
16 are being raised in single-parent households, some without
17 access to their fathers and their emotional and financial
18 support.

19 (6) A father's absence or noninvolvement can have a
20 negative impact on a child's well-being from birth forward,
21 increasing the risks of abuse, substance use, educational
22 underachievement and incarceration.

23 (7) In the absence of public policy that promotes
24 greater father involvement, many children will be less likely
25 to receive the level of parental support needed to achieve
26 economic stability, emotional well-being and independence.

27 (8) Societal and institutional barriers to greater
28 father involvement may include stigma linked to seeking
29 behavioral health services, ~~child support orders that create~~ <--
30 ~~obstacles to fathers engaging with children,~~ housing programs

1 that do not encourage fathers living with children and
2 educational and support services systems that do not foster
3 co-parenting.

4 (9) The public policy of the Commonwealth is to end
5 institutional barriers that may impede fathers in fostering
6 supportive connections with their children, establish support
7 mechanisms to enhance the ability of fathers to assume a
8 beneficial parenting role and assist men in preparing for the
9 legal, financial and emotional responsibilities of
10 fatherhood.

11 Section 4. Pennsylvania Advisory Committee on Greater Father
12 Involvement.

13 (a) Establishment.--The commission shall establish the
14 Pennsylvania Advisory Committee on Greater Father Involvement
15 within the commission.

16 ~~(b) Membership. The committee shall consist of the~~ <--
17 ~~following members:~~

18 ~~(1) Six members shall be appointed by the Governor, not~~
19 ~~more than three of whom may be registered in the same~~
20 ~~political party.~~

21 ~~(2) One member shall be appointed by the Chief Justice~~
22 ~~of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.~~

23 ~~(3) Six members shall be appointed by the General~~
24 ~~Assembly as follows:~~

25 ~~(i) One by the President pro tempore of the Senate.~~

26 ~~(ii) One by the Majority Leader of the Senate.~~

27 ~~(iii) One by the Minority Leader of the Senate.~~

28 ~~(iv) One by the Speaker of the House of~~

29 ~~Representatives.~~

30 ~~(v) One by the Majority Leader of the House of~~

1 ~~Representatives.~~

2 ~~(vi) One by the Minority Leader of the House of~~
3 ~~Representatives.~~

4 ~~(c) Terms. Members of the committee shall serve terms of~~
5 ~~three years, except that the initial terms of the members shall~~
6 ~~be as follows:~~

7 ~~(1) Two members appointed by the Governor, the member~~
8 ~~appointed by the Majority Leader of the House of~~
9 ~~Representatives and the member appointed by the Minority~~
10 ~~Leader of the House of Representatives shall each be~~
11 ~~appointed for an initial term of one year.~~

12 ~~(2) Two members appointed by the Governor, the member~~
13 ~~appointed by the Majority Leader of the Senate and the member~~
14 ~~appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate shall each be~~
15 ~~appointed for an initial term of two years.~~

16 ~~(3) The remaining members shall each be appointed for an~~
17 ~~initial term of three years.~~

18 (B) MEMBERSHIP.--THE COMMISSION SHALL APPOINT NO FEWER THAN <--
19 13 INDIVIDUALS TO SERVE AS MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE. COMMITTEE
20 MEMBERS SHALL BE RESIDENTS OF THIS COMMONWEALTH AND SHALL HAVE
21 DEMONSTRATED EXPERTISE IN ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- 22 (1) ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE.
- 23 (2) ADULT EDUCATION OR LITERACY.
- 24 (3) BEHAVIORAL HEALTH.
- 25 (4) EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT.
- 26 (5) EDUCATION.
- 27 (6) EMPLOYMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.
- 28 (7) FAMILY LAW AND CHILD CUSTODY.
- 29 (8) FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS OR INITIATIVES.
- 30 (9) HOUSING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING.

- 1 (10) PARENTING AND COPARENTING.
- 2 (11) PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONS.
- 3 (12) THE JUVENILE DEPENDENCY AND DELINQUENCY SYSTEMS.
- 4 (13) THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

5 ~~(d)~~ (C) Reimbursement.--The commission shall reimburse <--
6 members of the committee for all necessary and reasonable
7 expenses incurred in connection with the performance of their
8 duties as members of the committee.

9 ~~(e) Vacancies. A vacancy on the committee that occurs prior <--~~
10 ~~to the expiration of a term shall be filled in the manner of the~~
11 ~~original appointment.~~

12 ~~(f) Forfeiture for nonattendance. A member of the committee~~
13 ~~who fails to attend two consecutive meetings of the committee~~
14 ~~shall forfeit the seat, unless the chairperson of the committee~~
15 ~~receives written notification from the member that the absence~~
16 ~~was due to personal illness or the death or illness of an~~
17 ~~immediate family member.~~

18 ~~(g) Chairperson. The Governor~~ (D) CHAIRPERSON.--THE <--
19 COMMISSION shall designate one of the members of the committee
20 to be the chairperson of the committee. The following apply:

21 (1) The chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the
22 committee and perform all the duties and functions of the
23 chairperson.

24 (2) The committee may designate one of the members to be
25 the acting chairperson during the absence or incapacity of
26 the chairperson.

27 ~~(h)~~ (E) Other officers.--The committee may select other <--
28 officers as necessary to carry out the powers and duties of the
29 committee.

30 ~~(i)~~ (F) Meetings.-- <--

1 (1) The first meeting of the committee shall be held in
2 Harrisburg with all members physically present.

3 (2) Subsequent meetings of the committee may be held in
4 any manner or at any location that the committee deems
5 appropriate.

6 ~~(j)~~ (G) Quorum and official action.-- <--

7 (1) A majority of the committee shall constitute a
8 quorum to conduct business.

9 (2) A majority of those present at a meeting of the
10 committee shall be sufficient for official action to be taken
11 by the committee.

12 ~~(k) Open meetings. The meetings of the committee shall be~~ <--
13 ~~conducted in accordance with the provisions of 65 Pa.C.S. Ch. 7~~
14 ~~(relating to open meetings).~~

15 Section 5. Powers and duties of committee.

16 ~~(a) Responsibilities.~~ The committee shall: <--

17 (1) Work with State and local governments and other
18 entities through collaboration, coordination, research and
19 consultation to recognize and promote the contributions that
20 fathers make to improving societal outcomes for children and
21 families.

22 (2) Evaluate governmental programs and initiatives that
23 impact fatherhood and make recommendations regarding needed
24 improvements and existing impediments to successful
25 implementation of those programs and initiatives.

26 (3) Develop a comprehensive plan that will support early
27 connection of fathers to their children beginning in the
28 gestational stage of child development and continuing
29 throughout the life of the child.

30 (4) Promote and continue to support programs and

1 entities that foster the following:

2 (i) Workforce development programs that assist
3 fathers in preparing for, finding and securing
4 employment.

5 (ii) Parenting through skills-based educational
6 programs that foster quality co-parenting relationships.

7 (iii) Development of conflict resolution skills
8 training.

9 (5) Propose changes to statutes, regulations,
10 administrative rules and policies that impede the development
11 or implementation of greater father involvement measures or
12 that will enhance the prospect of success of those measures.

13 (6) Identify additional sources of funding, including
14 nongovernmental sources, to support the following:

15 (i) The work of the committee.

16 (ii) Programs that directly support fathers and
17 responsible fatherhood.

18 (7) MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE POSSIBLE <--
19 ESTABLISHMENT OF A LONG-TERM OR PERMANENT FATHERHOOD
20 COMMISSION AND ITS POWERS, DUTIES AND FUNDING.

21 ~~(7) Issue an annual~~ (8) ISSUE, BY DECEMBER 31, 2023, A <--
22 report to the Governor and the General Assembly regarding
23 responsible fatherhood programs and issues within this
24 Commonwealth. <--

25 ~~(b) Staff and grants. Subject to available resources, the~~
26 ~~committee may employ staff and award grants as necessary to~~
27 ~~perform its duties and functions prescribed in this act.~~

28 ~~(c) Reports. The committee may issue reports regarding~~
29 ~~responsible fatherhood programs and issues that will aid in~~
30 ~~understanding, evaluating or improving the successful~~

1 ~~implementation of these programs and issues.~~

2 ~~Section 6. Effective date.~~

3 ~~This act shall take effect in 60 days.~~ AND MAKING <--

4 RECOMMENDATIONS TO AID IN UNDERSTANDING, EVALUATING OR IMPROVING

5 THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE PROGRAMS AND ISSUES.

6 SECTION 6. EXPIRATION.

7 THE COMMITTEE SHALL EXPIRE JANUARY 31, 2024.

8 SECTION 7. EFFECTIVE DATE.

9 THIS ACT SHALL TAKE EFFECT IMMEDIATELY.