
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 122 Session of
2021

INTRODUCED BY O'MARA, SANCHEZ, RABB, HOHENSTEIN, GALLOWAY,
SCHWEYER, DALEY, D. WILLIAMS, KENYATTA, SCHLOSSBERG, CIRESI,
MALAGARI, McCLINTON, KINSEY, THOMAS, FRANKEL, MADDEN AND
SHUSTERMAN, JULY 8, 2021

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, JULY 8, 2021

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging Commonwealth agencies and the unified judicial system to
2 adopt and utilize sensitive language related to suicide.

3 WHEREAS, Suicide is defined as someone taking his or her own
4 life with conscious intent by lethal means such as a firearm,
5 poisoning, suffocation or other self-injury; and

6 WHEREAS, Approximately 48,000 Americans, including 2,000
7 Pennsylvanians, die by suicide each year; and

8 WHEREAS, Suicide is the second leading cause of death for
9 individuals from 10 to 34 years of age in the United States; and

10 WHEREAS, Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for
11 individuals from 35 to 54 years of age in the United States; and

12 WHEREAS, Suicide is the eighth leading cause of death for
13 individuals from 55 to 64 years of age in the United States; and

14 WHEREAS, Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in
15 Pennsylvania; and

16 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania's suicide rate of 14.9 per 100,000
17 people is higher than the national average of 14.2 per 100,000

1 people; and

2 WHEREAS, The suicide rate in Pennsylvania increased by 37%
3 between 1999 and 2018; and

4 WHEREAS, Nearly two and a half times as many individuals die
5 by suicide in Pennsylvania annually than by homicide; and

6 WHEREAS, The total deaths to suicide in Pennsylvania in 2018
7 reflect a total of 37,933 years of potential life lost before 65
8 years of age; and

9 WHEREAS, Due to the stigma, it is suspected that suicide
10 generally is underreported; and

11 WHEREAS, Prevention, education, advocacy, public policy and
12 community support are keys to addressing suicide stigma; and

13 WHEREAS, The sensitive use of suicide-related language is
14 also essential to eliminating suicide stigma; and

15 WHEREAS, The term "committed suicide" implies a level of
16 criminality while "completed suicide" implies earlier attempts
17 when there may have been none; and

18 WHEREAS, Both terms perpetuate the stigma associated with
19 suicide and are strongly discouraged; and

20 WHEREAS, Using the word "successful" or "failed" to describe
21 suicide is also discouraged; and

22 WHEREAS, "Died by suicide" or "died of suicide" as well as
23 "suicide death" and "fatal suicide behavior" are recommended
24 language; therefore be it

25 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives urge Commonwealth
26 agencies and the unified judicial system to adopt and utilize
27 sensitive language related to suicide in regulations, policies,
28 reports and other documents in print or electronic format; and
29 be it further

30 RESOLVED, That, for purposes of this resolution, sensitive

1 language related to suicide means language that does not
2 perpetuate the stigma of suicide or imply criminality when
3 reporting a death by suicide; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to
5 the Governor, the Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme
6 Court, each Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and the
7 court's officers and administrators.