
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 196 Session of
2023

INTRODUCED BY COLEMAN, TARTAGLIONE, ARGALL, LANGERHOLC,
MASTRIANO AND DUSH, NOVEMBER 9, 2023

REFERRED TO JUDICIARY, NOVEMBER 9, 2023

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing to conduct a
2 thorough and comprehensive study on the effects that post-
3 traumatic stress disorder or injury, military sexual trauma
4 and traumatic brain injury have on service members, veterans
5 and their families who are directly or indirectly involved or
6 implicated in any portion or component of the criminal
7 justice system.

8 WHEREAS, Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or post-
9 traumatic stress injury (PTSI) commonly affects veterans due to
10 their exposure to traumatic events during their military
11 service, including combat-related brain injuries; and

12 WHEREAS, For some veterans, these PTSD or PTSI symptoms might
13 contribute to their involvement in the criminal justice system;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, In recognition of the prevalence of adjustment
16 challenges among veterans involved in the criminal justice
17 system, various initiatives have been developed and implemented,
18 including veterans treatment courts, screening and assessment,
19 collaboration with the United States Department of Veterans
20 Affairs, access to mental health services, peer support

1 programs, trauma-informed trainings for criminal justice
2 professionals and reentry programs; and

3 WHEREAS, Court diversion and mentoring programs have proven
4 effective in helping veterans cope with challenges ranging from
5 mental health to transitioning back into civilian life; and

6 WHEREAS, Sustained research and evaluation is needed to
7 continuously improve data collection, identify, share and
8 rectify programming gaps and barriers to services across and
9 between all levels of government and involve community
10 stakeholders regarding issues affecting veterans involved in the
11 criminal justice system; and

12 WHEREAS, There is a growing recognition of the connection
13 between the prevalence of PTSD or PTSI, traumatic brain injuries
14 and military sexual trauma among veterans with readjustment
15 issues, particularly with veterans involved in the criminal
16 justice system; therefore be it

17 RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the Pennsylvania Commission
18 on Sentencing to conduct a thorough and comprehensive study on
19 the effects that post-traumatic stress disorder or injury,
20 military sexual trauma and traumatic brain injury have on
21 service members, veterans and their families who are directly or
22 indirectly involved or implicated in any portion or component of
23 the criminal justice system; and be it further

24 RESOLVED, That the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing
25 conduct the study in collaboration with the Department of
26 Corrections, the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs,
27 the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, the
28 Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts and the Attorney
29 General; and be it further

30 RESOLVED, That the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing

1 include all of the following information in the study:

2 (1) Each criminal case in this Commonwealth from 2016 to
3 2021 in which the criminal offender is identified as a
4 veteran, the severity of each offense, including the
5 statutory grading, offense gravity score and prior record
6 score, and the disposition of each case.

7 (2) Each criminal case in this Commonwealth from 2016 to
8 2021 in which the criminal offender was summoned to a
9 veterans treatment court.

10 (3) The amount of money necessary to establish
11 additional veterans treatment courts across this
12 Commonwealth.

13 (4) The number of criminal offenders identified as
14 veterans from 2016 to 2021 that committed two or more
15 offenses between 2016 and 2021 that did not arise out of the
16 same criminal case.

17 (5) The current consideration of each criminal offender
18 identified as a veteran with PTSD or PTSI, military sexual
19 trauma or traumatic brain injury during the sentencing in
20 this Commonwealth and nationwide.

21 (6) An evaluation of the thoroughness of the measures
22 used to ensure the identification of each veteran summoned to
23 the courts of common pleas and while incarcerated in a State
24 or county correctional institution.

25 (7) The potential impacts on the criminal justice system
26 and the timeliness of sentencing if courts are mandated to
27 complete a clinical assessment of each criminal offender
28 identified as a veteran for PTSD or PTSI, military sexual
29 trauma or traumatic brain injury prior to sentencing to
30 determine if the potential diagnoses should be considered

1 during sentencing when a professional clinical assessment
2 does not already exist.

3 (8) The current health care treatment options available,
4 including mental health treatment, for each criminal offender
5 identified as a veteran with PTSD or PTSI, military sexual
6 trauma or traumatic brain injury while incarcerated in a
7 State or county correctional institution.

8 (9) Additional health care treatment options that would
9 be beneficial to make available for each criminal offender
10 identified as a veteran with PTSD or PTSI, military sexual
11 trauma or traumatic brain injury while incarcerated in a
12 State or county correctional institution;

13 and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing
15 submit a report on the study, including findings and
16 recommendations, to the Senate no later than six months after
17 the adoption of this resolution; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That upon the Senate's receipt of the report, the
19 Judiciary Committee of the Senate be authorized to conduct
20 hearings to elicit testimony, documents and other evidence
21 relating to the findings and recommendations in the report.