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November 10, 2011

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TO: All Senators

FROM: Senator Kim Ward 

SUBJECT: Co-Sponsorship of Resolution – **Child Protection and Accountability Commission - Memo #30**

As a result of recent events relating to child abuse, I plan to introduce a resolution establishing the Child Protection and Accountability Commission.

The Senate Aging and Youth Committee held public hearings on August 26, 2011, receiving testimony on necessary changes to Pennsylvania's definition of child abuse and on October 4, 2011, receiving testimony related to difficulties in determining child abuse. In addition, the committee held a public hearing and the Senate passed Senate Bill 449, which requires additional child abuse training for mandatory child abuse reporters.

I believe that there must an immediate examination and comprehensive action taken. The resolution will establish a Child Protection and Accountability Commission and its review will include:

- (1) Definition of child abuse with regard to serious physical injury and serious bodily injury,
- (2) Definition of mandated reporters, including who is mandated to report, additional training for identifying child abuse, and responsibilities for reporting child abuse and the process for mandatory reporting,
- (3) ChildLine operations, including adequacy of staffing levels, the number of reports made and the process for investigation,
- (4) Coordination of efforts between state and county agencies investigating reports of child abuse and the maintenance of data and reporting information.
- (5) Examination of Pennsylvania's child protective services and general protective services classifications and compliance with the federal Jeanne Clergy Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act.

The commission will hold at least two public hearings during which it will hear testimony from experts representing the following areas: child protective services, law enforcement, physicians, hospital and school-based health care professionals, social services, child advocacy centers, victim services, crisis shelters and child welfare advocacy. A report of recommendations and findings will be made to the Senate by June 30, 2012, at which time the commission shall cease to exist.

If you would like to co-sponsor this resolution, please contact Vicki Wilken, Esq. in my office at 717-787-6063 or by email at vwilken@pasen.gov.