

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to establish a
2 bipartisan legislative task force and an advisory committee
3 to conduct a study of the occurrence, effects and trends of
4 homelessness in Pennsylvania and to report its findings and
5 recommendations to the House of Representatives.

6 WHEREAS, Shelter is a basic human need; and

7 WHEREAS, A stable, quality, affordable home promotes family
8 stability, physical and mental health and enhances both adults'
9 and children's ability to be productive. Conversely, the lack of
10 a stable, quality, affordable home increases the risk of
11 illness, failure at school, inability to find or hold a job,
12 incarceration and nursing home placement, often at public
13 expense; and

14 WHEREAS, In 2011, more than 34,000 Pennsylvanians spent at
15 least one night in an emergency or transitional housing program,
16 not including those individuals living on the street, under
17 bridges, in parks or sleeping in someone else's house
18 temporarily; and

19 WHEREAS, The National Alliance to End Homelessness reported

1 an estimated 235,000 Pennsylvanians as living doubled up in
2 someone else's house temporarily in 2011; and

3 WHEREAS, In Pennsylvania, statistics show that family,
4 veteran and chronic homelessness have all risen between 2011 and
5 2012; and

6 WHEREAS, Homeless pregnant mothers are less likely to have
7 received adequate prenatal care and more likely to be young and
8 without a high school education; and

9 WHEREAS, Children born to homeless mothers are more likely to
10 be born prematurely and at a low birth weight. These children
11 have higher than average rates of chronic health conditions such
12 as asthma, evidence high rates of chronic ear infections and are
13 at increased risk for iron-deficiency anemia and lead toxicity;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, In Pennsylvania, more than 9,400 children spent at
16 least one night in emergency or transitional housing in 2011,
17 nearly 60% of whom are less than six years of age; and

18 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania school districts provided services to
19 20,556 homeless children and youth in 2010-2011; and

20 WHEREAS, For many children, homelessness represents many
21 risks, including the likelihood of experiencing an array of
22 health challenges; and

23 WHEREAS, In addition to health-related risks, research
24 demonstrates that children experiencing homelessness are more
25 likely to have been exposed to family violence; and

26 WHEREAS, Almost 40% of children served by emergency housing
27 programs experienced substantiated abuse or neglect and more
28 than 20% had been placed in out-of-home care by the end of the
29 second grade; and

30 WHEREAS, The effects of childhood homelessness do not end

1 with childhood. Homeless children experience higher rates of
2 physical and sexual risk behaviors and are more likely to
3 partake in illegal substances; and

4 WHEREAS, Homeless children show higher rates of poor mental
5 health, are less likely to graduate from high school and are
6 more likely to end up incarcerated; and

7 WHEREAS, The adverse influence of childhood homelessness on
8 children's health, development and well-being is associated with
9 short-term and long-term societal costs that far exceed the cost
10 of providing shelter alone and creates a costly toll on society;
11 and

12 WHEREAS, Funding for the Homeless Assistance Program in
13 Pennsylvania has decreased by \$8,000,000 since 2008; and

14 WHEREAS, The high demand for housing and other causative
15 factors of homelessness compelled counties in Pennsylvania to
16 increase their emergency housing units for families by 12% from
17 2009-2011; therefore be it

18 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission be
19 directed to establish a bipartisan legislative task force to
20 investigate, review and make recommendations of the causes and
21 impacts of homelessness in Pennsylvania; and be it further

22 RESOLVED, That the task force be authorized to hold public
23 hearings, take testimony and conduct site visits; and be it
24 further

25 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission oversee
26 the creation of an advisory committee of no fewer than 13
27 members to assist the task force in its study and
28 recommendations; and be it further

29 RESOLVED, That the advisory committee be a bipartisan, broad-
30 based and geographically diverse representation among the

1 business, faith, community, labor, local government and human
2 services communities and individuals affected by poverty; and be
3 it further

4 RESOLVED, That the advisory committee be comprised of at
5 least:

6 (1) one representative from the executive branch;

7 (2) four representatives of agencies that work with
8 homeless Pennsylvanians, with every reasonable effort made to
9 include diverse homeless populations, such as veterans,
10 people with disabilities, families with children, single
11 individuals, senior citizens and victims of domestic
12 violence;

13 (3) individuals from the general public; and

14 (4) two individuals from each of the Southeastern,
15 Northeastern, Central and Western geographic regions of this
16 Commonwealth;

17 and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the advisory committee examine data, interview
19 individuals and families, survey communities through methods
20 decided by the committee and examine successful strategies used
21 in other states' poverty reduction efforts; and be it further

22 RESOLVED, That additional assistance in this endeavor be
23 provided by the Urban Affairs Committee of the House of
24 Representatives; and be it further

25 RESOLVED, That the task force, with the assistance of the
26 advisory committee:

27 (1) Review other recent studies of homelessness from
28 around the country.

29 (2) Research and review the cost factor of homelessness
30 that shall include health care costs, education, mental

1 health, incarceration rates and other factors.

2 (3) Undertake a comprehensive analysis of Pennsylvania's
3 homelessness problem to determine what policy
4 recommendations, if any, would move the Commonwealth toward
5 permanently reducing and eliminating homelessness.

6 (4) Examine other matters that it deems important;
7 and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That the task force propose new legislation, if
9 necessary and appropriate; and be it further

10 RESOLVED, That the task force and advisory committee choose a
11 chairperson from among its members; and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That members of the task force and advisory
13 committee serve without compensation, but be reimbursed for
14 necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties,
15 within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made
16 available to the task force and advisory committee for their
17 purposes. All members of the task force or advisory committee
18 who are duly elected members of the General Assembly shall
19 remain members of the task force or advisory committee until
20 they report their findings and recommendations to the House of
21 Representatives; and be it further

22 RESOLVED, That all State, county and municipal agencies,
23 departments, boards, bureaus and commissions cooperate fully
24 with the task force and advisory committee; and be it further

25 RESOLVED, That the task force and advisory committee report
26 their findings and recommendations to the House of
27 Representatives no later than two years after the adoption of
28 this resolution.

