INTRODUCED BY PARKER, BELFANTI, BISHOP, BRIGGS, BROWN, COHEN, CRIGHTON, DALEY, DePASQUALE, DONATUCCI, FABRIZIO, FRANKEL, FREEMAN, GEORGE, HARPER, HELM, JOHNSON, JOSEPHS, KIRKLAND, KORTZ, KULA, LENTZ, LONGIETTI, MANDERINO, McGEEHAN, MUNDY, MYERS, M. O'BRIEN, OLIVER, PAYTON, QUINN, ROEBUCK, SIPTROTH, STABACK, VULAKOVICH, WATERS, WHEATLEY, WILLIAMS AND YOUNGBLOOD, MARCH 26, 2009

A RESOLUTION

Directing the Joint State Government Commission to establish an advisory committee to study the effects of parental incarceration on children of incarcerated parents; to recommend a system for determining and assessing the needs of children of incarcerated parents, services available to them, and barriers to accessing those services; and making a report with recommendations to the House of Representatives by November 30, 2010.

WHEREAS, In the United States, more than 2 million children have a parent who is currently incarcerated; and

WHEREAS, Nearly 10 million children in the United States have or had a parent who was under correctional supervision at some point in the child's life; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 65% of the women in State prison are mothers of children under 18 years of age, and nearly two-thirds of these mothers lived with their children before they were arrested and incarcerated; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 55% of the men in State prison are
fathers of children under 18 years of age, and nearly half of
these fathers lived with their children before they were
arrested and incarcerated; and
WHEREAS, Parental imprisonment and involvement in the
criminal justice system can impose serious financial hardships
on a family and can lead to disrupted living arrangements for
children, factors which are linked to an increased risk of
delinquency; and
WHEREAS, Children of incarcerated parents suffer emotional
and psychological effects when separated from their parents,
beginning with the trauma of arrest and continuing through
incarceration; and
WHEREAS, Incarcerated parents often lose contact with their
children and once they lose contact, it is very difficult to
reestablish that relationship when the parent is released; and
WHEREAS, More than half of all incarcerated parents in the
United States report never receiving a personal visit from their
children; and
WHEREAS, Several barriers exist that affect the overall
experience of parent-child visits in prison, including
inadequate or inconvenient visiting hours, difficulty in
scheduling visits, geographical location of prison facilities,
visiting procedures or facilities that are uncomfortable or lack
child-friendly visiting areas; and
WHEREAS, Finding ways for a child to connect with his or her
incarcerated parent helps the child understand why his or her
parent is absent, eases family reunification when the parent
returns home and helps reduce the parent's chance of recidivism;
therefore be it
RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the Joint
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State Government Commission to establish an advisory committee to study the effects of parental incarceration on the children of incarcerated parents; to recommend a system for identifying and assessing the needs of the children of incarcerated parents, the services available to them and the barriers to accessing those services; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the advisory committee be comprised of approximately 30 members and include persons representing all relevant aspects of the criminal justice and social welfare systems, representatives of academia, the faith community, child advocates, private and public organizations involved in criminal justice and social welfare issues, and other persons who have an interest and expertise in the issue of children of incarcerated parents; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the advisory committee report to the House of Representatives with its findings and recommendations no later than two years from the date that this resolution is adopted.