
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 338 Session of
2003

INTRODUCED BY GANNON, BROWNE, CAPPELLI, COY, CRAHALLA, CRUZ,
DALEY, DeLUCA, DeWEESE, FICHTER, FRANKEL, HARHAI, HERMAN,
HERSHEY, JOSEPHS, KOTIK, LAUGHLIN, LEWIS, MICOZZIE, PICKETT,
READSHAW, REICHLEY, ROSS, SCAVELLO, STERN, E. Z. TAYLOR,
THOMAS, YOUNGBLOOD AND HARHART, JUNE 26, 2003

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,
JUNE 26, 2003

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to
2 provide a comprehensive report to the General Assembly and
3 the Governor on data collected and evaluated by national
4 experts, with the support of the United States Department of
5 Health and Human Services and facilitated by the Council of
6 State Governments, of two county-based mental health
7 diversion programs and one program that works with offenders
8 with mental illnesses released from State prisons in this
9 Commonwealth and to demonstrate the fiscal impact of these
10 programs and the desirability, viability and appropriateness
11 of encouraging similar program development, implementation
12 and funding options throughout this Commonwealth.

13 WHEREAS, The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee is a
14 bipartisan, bicameral legislative service agency consisting of
15 12 members of the General Assembly established by statute to
16 conduct studies and make recommendations aimed at eliminating
17 unnecessary expenditures, to promote economy in the government
18 of the Commonwealth and to assure that Commonwealth funds are
19 being expended in accordance with legislative intent and law;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, The committee is authorized to conduct a wide range

1 of research activities pertaining to the operation and
2 performance of State-funded programs and agencies; and

3 WHEREAS, The inmate population in this Commonwealth grew at a
4 rate of 5.5% last year, up from zero growth in 1999, and now
5 tops 40,000 people; and

6 WHEREAS, Corrections officials have stated that this growth
7 rate is the equivalent of a new prison every year; and

8 WHEREAS, Many of these increased admissions are nonviolent
9 offenders and technical parole violators who have committed no
10 crime but have violated a condition of their parole; and

11 WHEREAS, The rate of mental illnesses in Commonwealth prisons
12 and local jails is at least three times the rate in the general
13 population, with approximately three quarters of these
14 individuals having a co-occurring substance abuse disorder; and

15 WHEREAS, The growing number of inmates with mental illnesses,
16 and the lack of appropriate resources in jail and prison to
17 screen and treat these individuals, weakens staff morale,
18 jeopardizes the safety of staff and inmates alike and
19 exacerbates jail and prison overcrowding and the cost of
20 operating corrections systems; and

21 WHEREAS, The justice system offers in most cases no treatment
22 alternatives to incarcerations, and in most places in this
23 Commonwealth the mental health, substance abuse and criminal
24 justice systems offer a patchwork of uncoordinated interventions
25 or no response for individuals with a serious mental illness or
26 co-occurring substance abuse disorder; and

27 WHEREAS, The use of newer psychotropic medications has
28 resulted in improved response to treatment for individuals with
29 a serious mental illness, and access to these new medications
30 has resulted in restored health and enhanced public safety; and

1 WHEREAS, Criminal justice, mental health and substance abuse
2 systems that do not provide a coordinated response to
3 individuals with serious mental illness often end up using
4 expensive public safety and emergency services to respond to
5 some of those individuals; and

6 WHEREAS, System integration between the mental health,
7 substance abuse and criminal justice systems at the county,
8 regional and State levels can provide prompt, appropriate
9 treatment and interventions to break the cycles of
10 decompensation and incarceration to successfully reduce the
11 number of individuals with serious mental illnesses entering
12 into, residing in and reentering the criminal justice system;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, The Council of State Governments in June 2002 issued
15 a comprehensive report, "The Criminal Justice/Mental Health
16 Consensus Project Report," designed to help State and local
17 government officials who are dealing with the problem of
18 significant numbers of people with a mental illness or a mental
19 illness with co-occurring substance abuse disorder in prison or
20 jail; and

21 WHEREAS, This report lists several instances in the criminal
22 justice system, from the initial call to police to a person's
23 release from prison to a person's parole violation, where State
24 and local government officials can take steps to improve the
25 response to people with mental illnesses who come into contact
26 with the criminal justice system; and

27 WHEREAS, National experts working with the support of the
28 United States Department of Health and Human Services in
29 conjunction with the Council of State Governments have assisted
30 Chester County officials in simulating the fiscal impact of a

1 planned mental health diversion program, Allegheny County
2 officials in evaluating the fiscal impact of a mental health
3 diversion program already under way and Philadelphia County
4 officials in evaluating the fiscal impact of the Gaudenzia
5 Forensic Intensive Recovery State Program; therefore be it

6 RESOLVED (the Senate concurring), That the General Assembly
7 direct the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to work with
8 the Council of State Governments to secure any evaluation
9 information that is developed regarding the programs in Chester
10 County, Allegheny County and Philadelphia County and within 120
11 days of receipt of this information provide a report, that has
12 received comments from appropriate staff at the Department of
13 Corrections and the Department of Public Welfare, to the General
14 Assembly and the Governor demonstrating the fiscal impact of
15 these programs and the desirability, viability and
16 appropriateness of encouraging similar program development,
17 implementation and funding options throughout this Commonwealth;
18 and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
20 in its report also address the desirability and viability of
21 replicating the use of the simulation model being used in the
22 Chester County program.