

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 203 Session of 2009

INTRODUCED BY PARKER, BELFANTI, BISHOP, BRIGGS, BROWN, COHEN, CREIGHTON, 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

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH, MARCH 26, 2009

A RESOLUTION

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

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

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

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

18 WHEREAS, Approximately 55% of the men in State prison are

1 fathers of children under 18 years of age, and nearly half of  
2 these fathers lived with their children before they were  
3 arrested and incarcerated; and

4 WHEREAS, Parental imprisonment and involvement in the  
5 criminal justice system can impose serious financial hardships  
6 on a family and can lead to disrupted living arrangements for  
7 children, factors which are linked to an increased risk of  
8 delinquency; and

9 WHEREAS, Children of incarcerated parents suffer emotional  
10 and psychological effects when separated from their parents,  
11 beginning with the trauma of arrest and continuing through  
12 incarceration; and

13 WHEREAS, Incarcerated parents often lose contact with their  
14 children and once they lose contact, it is very difficult to  
15 reestablish that relationship when the parent is released; and

16 WHEREAS, More than half of all incarcerated parents in the  
17 United States report never receiving a personal visit from their  
18 children; and

19 WHEREAS, Several barriers exist that affect the overall  
20 experience of parent-child visits in prison, including  
21 inadequate or inconvenient visiting hours, difficulty in  
22 scheduling visits, geographical location of prison facilities,  
23 visiting procedures or facilities that are uncomfortable or lack  
24 child-friendly visiting areas; and

25 WHEREAS, Finding ways for a child to connect with his or her  
26 incarcerated parent helps the child understand why his or her  
27 parent is absent, eases family reunification when the parent  
28 returns home and helps reduce the parent's chance of recidivism;  
29 therefore be it

30 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the Joint

1 State Government Commission to establish an advisory committee  
2 to study the effects of parental incarceration on the children  
3 of incarcerated parents; to recommend a system for identifying  
4 and assessing the needs of the children of incarcerated parents,  
5 the services available to them and the barriers to accessing  
6 those services; and be it further

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

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