

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

# HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 659 Session of 2012

INTRODUCED BY WATERS, THOMAS, V. BROWN, READSHAW, BISHOP,  
BUXTON, PAYTON, SANTONI, DIGIROLAMO, MANN, COHEN, CREIGHTON,  
DALEY, BROWNLEE, FABRIZIO, JOSEPHS, KORTZ, MAHONEY,  
YOUNGBLOOD, MIRABITO AND M. SMITH, APRIL 3, 2012

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, APRIL 3, 2012

## A RESOLUTION

1 Declaring youth violence as a public health epidemic and  
2 supporting the establishment of Statewide trauma-informed  
3 education.

4 WHEREAS, Youth across this Commonwealth are committing acts  
5 of violence against one another and throughout their  
6 communities; and

7 WHEREAS, A national survey by the Centers for Disease Control  
8 and Prevention (CDC) found that United States adults reported  
9 approximately 1.56 million incidents of victimization by  
10 perpetrators estimated to be between 12 and 20 years of age; and

11 WHEREAS, The CDC states, "Violence is a serious public health  
12 problem in the United States. From infants to the elderly, it  
13 affects people in all stages of life. In 2007, more than 18,000  
14 people were victims of homicide and more than 34,000 took their  
15 own life."; and

16 WHEREAS, The CDC reports that many people survive violence  
17 and are left with permanent physical and emotional scars and

1 that violence erodes communities by reducing productivity,  
2 decreasing property values and disrupting social services; and

3 WHEREAS, A national initiative lead by the CDC, Striving to  
4 Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere (STRYVE), assists communities  
5 in applying a public health perspective to preventing youth  
6 violence; and

7 WHEREAS, In 1985, former United States Surgeon General C.  
8 Everett Koop declared violence as a public health issue and  
9 called for the application of the science of public health to  
10 the treatment and prevention of violence; and

11 WHEREAS, In 2000, former United States Surgeon General David  
12 Satcher declared youth violence as a public health epidemic; and

13 WHEREAS, Dr. Satcher released a report that deems youth  
14 violence as a threat to public health and calls for Federal,  
15 state, local and private entities to invest in research on youth  
16 violence and for the use of the knowledge gained to inform  
17 intervention programs; and

18 WHEREAS, The report states that the public health approach to  
19 youth violence involves identifying risk and protective factors,  
20 determining how they work, making the public aware of these  
21 findings and designing programs to prevent or stop the violence;  
22 and

23 WHEREAS, The 2000 public health report calls for national  
24 resolve to confront the problem of youth violence  
25 systematically; to facilitate entry of youth into effective  
26 intervention programs rather than incarceration; to improve  
27 public awareness of effective interventions; to convene youth,  
28 families, researchers and public and private organizations for a  
29 periodic youth violence summit; to develop new collaborative  
30 multidisciplinary partnerships; and to hold periodic, highly

1 visible national summits; and

2 WHEREAS, An individual's characteristics, experiences and  
3 environmental conditions during childhood and adolescence are an  
4 indicator of future violent behavior; and

5 WHEREAS, Ages 15 through 18, the ages that students spend in  
6 high school, are the peak years of offending; and

7 WHEREAS, There is concern about high school dropout rates,  
8 academic performance and violence in schools across this  
9 Commonwealth; and

10 WHEREAS, According to the Yale School of Medicine Child Study  
11 Center, the Comer School Development Program offers low-  
12 achieving schools assistance in creating a conducive learning  
13 environment while providing a solid foundation for students; and

14 WHEREAS, The work of the Yale School of Medicine Child Study  
15 Center has demonstrated that, "When teachers, administrators,  
16 parents, and/or mature adults interact with students in a  
17 supportive school environment and/or culture, and provide  
18 adequate instruction in a way that mediates physical, social-  
19 interactive, psycho-emotional, moral-ethical, linguistic and  
20 cognitive-intellectual development, acceptable academic  
21 achievement will take place."; and

22 WHEREAS, The Comer School Development Program is an operating  
23 system comprised of three teams: the School Planning and  
24 Management Team, the Student and Staff Support Team and the  
25 Parent Team, which work together to create a comprehensive  
26 school plan; and

27 WHEREAS, The Comer School Development Program model is guided  
28 by three principles: decision-making by consensus, no-fault  
29 problem solving and collaboration; and

30 WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania State Conference of the National

1 Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)  
2 Branches, through its Education Committee members, have given  
3 testimony before the Education Committee of the House of  
4 Representatives calling for attention to the impact of trauma  
5 brought about by violence and other adverse conditions on  
6 children's academic performance as well as their relationship  
7 with school and the broader society; and

8 WHEREAS, Due to the violence epidemic, youth suffer from  
9 either primary or secondary trauma. Primary trauma is trauma  
10 associated with the violent death of a loved one. Secondary  
11 trauma results from exposure to violence present within their  
12 community; and

13 WHEREAS, Exposure to violence in families and communities, as  
14 well as exposure to homicidal death, can lead to youth-specific  
15 post-traumatic stress disorder with complex effects as well as  
16 homicidal grief; and

17 WHEREAS, Trauma is not easily visible within youth because it  
18 requires proper assessment and, due to the amount of violence  
19 youth are currently exposed to, measures should be taken to  
20 properly assess the issue; and

21 WHEREAS, The experience of trauma impacts children of all  
22 situations and conditions across this Commonwealth; and

23 WHEREAS, In August 2007, the CDC deemed schools as providing  
24 "a critical opportunity for changing societal behavior because  
25 almost the entire population is engaged in this institution for  
26 many years, starting at an early and formative period" and  
27 "Universal school-based violence prevention programs represent  
28 an important means of reducing violent and aggressive behavior  
29 in the United States."; therefore be it

30 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives declare youth

- 1 violence as a public health epidemic and support the
- 2 establishment of Statewide trauma-informed education.