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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 147 Session of  
2011

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INTRODUCED BY SCARNATI, PICCOLA, M. WHITE AND D. WHITE,  
JUNE 17, 2011

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REFERRED TO EDUCATION, JUNE 17, 2011

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A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to  
2 examine the Commonwealth's programs for postsecondary  
3 education in Commonwealth rural communities and to make  
4 recommendations for improving the delivery of open admissions  
5 and affordable, high-quality community and technical  
6 education in such areas.

7 WHEREAS, The mission of Pennsylvania's community and  
8 technical colleges is to increase the work force readiness  
9 skills and educational attainment of Pennsylvanians; and

10 WHEREAS, This Commonwealth's community and technical colleges  
11 provide an exceptional educational value for more than 220,000  
12 Pennsylvanians annually; and

13 WHEREAS, There are large areas of rural Pennsylvania,  
14 including an 11-county area in northwestern/central Pennsylvania  
15 that is geographically larger than Massachusetts, that have no  
16 community colleges; and

17 WHEREAS, The Commonwealth's funding formula for community  
18 colleges requires a de facto one-third local share contribution;  
19 and

20 WHEREAS, Many rural counties and communities cannot afford

1 the required local share for community college funding; and

2 WHEREAS, The Educational Consortium of the Upper Allegheny  
3 (ECUA), a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the  
4 Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (Public Law 99-514, 26 U.S.C. §  
5 501(c)(3)), has established agreements and signed resolutions  
6 with 30 school districts and four career and technical centers  
7 in 10 of the 11 counties to cooperate in the implementation of  
8 regional community college programs and services utilizing  
9 existing facilities; and

10 WHEREAS, The ECUA currently works collaboratively with the  
11 Community Education Councils; and

12 WHEREAS, The ECUA has established agreements with Butler  
13 County Community College and Harrisburg Area Community College;  
14 and

15 WHEREAS, For persons living in rural Pennsylvania, the  
16 requirement to drive an hour or more one way, coupled with the  
17 cost of gasoline, books and tuition, often can make pursuit of a  
18 postsecondary education an out-of-reach goal; and

19 WHEREAS, The medium family income of the 11 counties is  
20 \$8,000, or 20%, below the State average and low levels of  
21 educational attainment are linked to poverty; and

22 WHEREAS, In the 1960s, when Pennsylvania's community college  
23 system was created, it was envisioned as a system of 28  
24 community and technical colleges; and

25 WHEREAS, Today, that goal is only at the halfway mark, with  
26 14 community colleges founded under the act of August 24, 1963  
27 (P.L.1132, No.484), known as the Community College Act of 1963;  
28 and

29 WHEREAS, Among the 50 states, this Commonwealth ranks 46th in  
30 the number of community colleges per capita; and

1       WHEREAS, States vary widely in their commitment and approach  
2 to funding community colleges; and

3       WHEREAS, Many rural areas, both in Pennsylvania and other  
4 states, have created innovative and collaborative approaches to  
5 providing community college opportunities that do not require  
6 the construction of new buildings and facilities; and

7       WHEREAS, While not thoroughly tested in time, the ECUA model  
8 is an innovative approach with merit which could service the 11  
9 counties and could be a model for other rural regions of this  
10 Commonwealth; therefore be it

11       RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the Legislative Budget and  
12 Finance Committee to conduct a study of the need for additional  
13 community college educational opportunities in this  
14 Commonwealth's rural communities; and be it further

15       RESOLVED, That the study include at a minimum an analysis of  
16 the following:

17           (1) the current system for funding community and  
18 technical colleges in Pennsylvania and the impact of that  
19 system on this Commonwealth's rural counties and communities;

20           (2) the location of postsecondary educational  
21 institutions in Pennsylvania's rural counties;

22           (3) the role of the ECUA in collaboration with Community  
23 Education Councils in supporting additional community college  
24 educational opportunities for Pennsylvania's rural citizens;  
25 and

26           (4) funding approaches used in other states to support  
27 community college educational opportunities in rural areas;  
28 and be it further

29       RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
30 consult with the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania

1 Commission for Community Colleges, the Educational Consortium of  
2 the Upper Allegheny and other individuals and organizations as  
3 the committee deems appropriate; and be it further

4       RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
5 provide recommendations necessary or desirable to improve the  
6 postsecondary educational opportunities, particularly through  
7 community and technical colleges, available to citizens living  
8 in this Commonwealth's rural counties; and be it further

9       RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
10 provide recommendations for the best approach to funding  
11 community college programming in rural areas; and be it further

12       RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
13 analyze the relationship of postsecondary costs to the  
14 participation rates of low-income families; and be it further

15       RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
16 report to the Senate the results of its findings and  
17 recommendations by October 31, 2011.