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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 61 Session of  
2013

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INTRODUCED BY MENSCH, SCARNATI, TOMLINSON, GREENLEAF, FONTANA,  
SMITH, HUGHES, BREWSTER, STACK, BAKER, ALLOWAY, FERLO,  
ERICKSON, HUTCHINSON, VOGEL, BROWNE, COSTA, GORDNER,  
TARTAGLIONE, VULAKOVICH, FARNESE AND BOSCOLA, MARCH 20, 2013

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REFERRED TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE, MARCH 20, 2013

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A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to study  
2 and to issue a report on the status of and any disparities  
3 found in dental care for Pennsylvanians with disabilities.

4 WHEREAS, Dental care is vitally important for each of us,  
5 affecting overall health, employability and social inclusion;  
6 and

7 WHEREAS, Many individuals, including the unemployed, those of  
8 low income, the uninsured and the elderly, have great difficulty  
9 finding and seeing a dentist and paying for dental care, and  
10 those who have disabilities have greater difficulties still  
11 because of the very nature of dental offices, many of which are  
12 not accessible to people with physical disabilities; and

13 WHEREAS, Beyond structural inaccessibility, many individuals  
14 with disabilities are insured through Medicaid and there is a  
15 chronic and serious shortage of dentists and dental care  
16 professionals available to Medicaid patients; and

17 WHEREAS, Dental patients with disabilities may present to the

1 dental health professional other challenges that the dentist is  
2 unwilling or unskilled to undertake, including positive  
3 behavioral supports, the need for anesthesia and the concomitant  
4 need for specialized anesthesia application; and

5 WHEREAS, Lack of dental care is a recognized indicator of  
6 greater likelihood of chronic illnesses and poor health  
7 outcomes; and

8 WHEREAS, Dental care and preventive dental health are far  
9 less expensive to deliver than is care resulting from the lack  
10 of oral health care and the chronic and serious conditions that  
11 are left untreated; and

12 WHEREAS, The breadth and depth of the problem of lack of  
13 access to dental care must be fully understood before systemic  
14 changes are made in the way health care professionals are  
15 recruited and incentivized to serve persons with disabilities  
16 and other underserved communities; therefore be it

17 RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the Legislative Budget and  
18 Finance Committee to conduct a study of the disparities that  
19 exist in accessing and receiving dental care among persons with  
20 disabilities in this Commonwealth and to issue a report; and be  
21 it further

22 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
23 determine the need for and availability of dental providers for  
24 children and adults 21 years of age and older with disabilities,  
25 county by county, throughout the State; and be it further

26 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
27 examine availability of dental services for children and adults  
28 with disabilities in community-based care and specialized care,  
29 including the availability of accessible offices and equipment,  
30 the opportunity for dentists to perform deep sedation and

1 anesthesia, conscious sedation and nitrous oxide for individuals  
2 with disabilities, which services accept Medicaid and which  
3 counties need additional dental care and specialty support; and  
4 be it further

5       RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
6 study its findings and make recommendations as to what will  
7 preserve the quality dental services already in place and what  
8 mechanisms, including the feasibility of increasing Medicaid  
9 dental care payments; liberalizing and modifying dental loan  
10 repayment programs for service in underserved areas and for this  
11 underserved population; requiring private insurers to pay for  
12 anesthesia services for dental patients who are persons with  
13 disabilities who need such service; and work force initiatives  
14 to responsibly expand the scopes of practice of carefully  
15 supervised dental public health hygienists will incentivize more  
16 dental practitioners to open their practices to persons with  
17 disabilities; and be it further

18       RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
19 compile a report based on its findings and recommendations and  
20 submit the report to the Senate as soon as possible, but not  
21 later than November 30, 2014.