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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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# HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 305 Session of  
2015

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INTRODUCED BY DiGIROLAMO, CRUZ, READSHAW, KINSEY, ACOSTA,  
SCHWEYER, COHEN, DAVIS, RADER, ORTITAY, BROWNLEE, WATERS,  
D. MILLER, GAINNEY, HENNESSEY, McNEILL, DRISCOLL, McCARTER,  
V. BROWN, SCHLOSSBERG, PASHINSKI, C. PARKER, PEIFER, MURT,  
DONATUCCI, HEFFLEY, SIMS, STAATS, O'NEILL, M. DALEY AND DEAN,  
MAY 4, 2015

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MAY 4, 2015

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## A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the Commonwealth to adopt and utilize person-first  
2 language with respect to people with disabilities.

3 WHEREAS, Approximately one in every six residents of this  
4 Commonwealth is a person with a disability; and

5 WHEREAS, These persons, approximately 1.8 million  
6 individuals, comprise every geographic, socioeconomic, racial  
7 and ethnic, age, gender and religious group; and

8 WHEREAS, These persons, approximately 700,000 children and  
9 youths and 1.1 million adults, are a part of our communities,  
10 schools and workplaces; and

11 WHEREAS, People with disabilities are protected by Federal  
12 and State laws prohibiting discrimination and promoting  
13 integration, inclusion and participation in society, including  
14 in the receipt of services, education, employment,  
15 transportation and housing; and

16 WHEREAS, People with disabilities continue to encounter

1 negative attitudes, barriers, segregation, discrimination and  
2 isolation in society; and

3 WHEREAS, Using language that puts a disability before the  
4 individual or that describes the individual by a medical  
5 diagnosis devalues and disrespects the humanity of that  
6 individual; and

7 WHEREAS, Inaccurate descriptions, outdated words,  
8 generalizations and other negative language about people with  
9 disabilities contribute to stigma, misinformation, negative  
10 stereotypes and attitudinal barriers; and

11 WHEREAS, Person-first language, also known as people-first  
12 language, places the individual before the disability and uses  
13 neutral, objective, accurate and nonpejorative language; and

14 WHEREAS, Person-first language results in positive, realistic  
15 and balanced communication about people with disabilities and  
16 treats each person as an individual not defined solely by a  
17 disability; and

18 WHEREAS, Language shapes the ideas, attitudes and beliefs of  
19 individuals and society; and

20 WHEREAS, Language thus influences government decisions,  
21 policies and laws; therefore be it

22 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives recognize that  
23 the use of language that is not person-first language with  
24 respect to people with disabilities hinders their integration,  
25 inclusion, participation and respect in society and negatively  
26 influences government decisions, policies and laws; and be it  
27 further

28 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives urge adoption and  
29 utilization by the Commonwealth of person-first language with  
30 respect to people with disabilities; and be it further

1       RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives urge adoption and  
2 utilization of person-first language in legislation,  
3 cosponsorship memos, reports, policies and other documents of  
4 the General Assembly in print or electronic format; and be it  
5 further

6       RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives urge adoption and  
7 utilization of person-first language by executive branch  
8 agencies and the judiciary in regulations, policies, reports and  
9 other documents in print or electronic format; and be it further

10       RESOLVED, That, for purposes of this resolution, person-first  
11 language or people-first language means language that places the  
12 individual before his or her disability, does not reduce the  
13 individual to a series of labels, symptoms or medical terms and  
14 does not use outdated, inaccurate or pejorative descriptors or  
15 terms; and be it further

16       RESOLVED, That the following examples serve as models of  
17 appropriate use of person-first language:

18           (1) "individual with a disability," not "disabled  
19 individual";

20           (2) "individual who uses a wheelchair," not "individual  
21 who is wheelchair-bound" or "confined to a wheelchair";

22           (3) "individuals who are blind," not "the blind";

23           (4) "an individual with a mental health condition," not  
24 "an individual who suffers from a mental disorder";

25           (5) "individual with paraplegia," not "a paraplegic";

26           (6) "individual who is deaf or hard of hearing," not  
27 "the deaf" or "the hard of hearing"; and

28           (7) "individual with an intellectual disability," not  
29 "mental retardation";

30 and be it further

1       RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to  
2 the Honorable Thomas Saylor, the Chief Justice of the  
3 Pennsylvania Supreme Court, to each Justice of the Pennsylvania  
4 Supreme Court and to the Court's officers and administrators.