
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 115 Session of
2019

INTRODUCED BY KIRKLAND, ISAACSON, A. DAVIS, HILL-EVANS, KINSEY,
READSHAW, YOUNGBLOOD, MURT, ROEBUCK, McCLINTON, BULLOCK,
DAVIDSON, FITZGERALD, WHEATLEY AND WILLIAMS, MARCH 6, 2019

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, MARCH 6, 2019

A RESOLUTION

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

4 WHEREAS, Youths 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, According to the CDC, violence is a serious public
12 health problem in the United States and affects people in all
13 stages of life; and

14 WHEREAS, Each year, youth homicides and nonfatal physical
15 assault-related injuries result in more than \$21 billion in
16 combined medical and lost productivity costs; and

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

1 WHEREAS, The CDC further reports that violence erodes
2 communities by reducing productivity, decreasing property values
3 and disrupting social services; and

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

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

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

14 WHEREAS, Dr. Satcher released a report that deems youth
15 violence as a threat to public health and calls for Federal,
16 state, local and private entities to invest in research on youth
17 violence and gain knowledge to aid 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, facilitate entry of youths into effective
26 intervention programs rather than incarceration, improve public
27 awareness of effective interventions, convene youths, families,
28 researchers and public and private organizations for a periodic
29 youth violence summit, develop new collaborative
30 multidisciplinary partnerships and hold periodic, highly visible

1 national summits; and

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

5 WHEREAS, The peak ages of offending are 15 through 19 years
6 of age, the years that students spend in high school; 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 mission of the Yale School of Medicine Child
15 Study Center is to improve the mental health of children and
16 families, advance understanding of their psychological and
17 developmental needs and treat and prevent childhood mental
18 illness through the integration of research, clinical practice
19 and professional training; and

20 WHEREAS, The Comer School Development Program is an operating
21 system comprised of three teams which include the School
22 Planning and Management Team, the Student and Staff Support Team
23 and the Parent Team, which work together to create a
24 Comprehensive School Plan; and

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

28 WHEREAS, Due to the violence epidemic, youths suffer from
29 either primary or secondary trauma; and

30 WHEREAS, Primary trauma is trauma associated with the violent

1 death of a loved one and secondary trauma results from exposure
2 to violence present within their community; and

3 WHEREAS, Exposure to violence in families and communities, as
4 well as exposure to homicidal death, can lead to youth-specific
5 post-traumatic stress disorder with complex effects and
6 homicidal grief; and

7 WHEREAS, Trauma is not easily visible within youths because
8 it requires proper assessment and, due to the amount of violence
9 youths are currently exposed to, measures should be taken to
10 properly assess the issue; and

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

13 WHEREAS, In August 2007, the CDC deemed schools as providing
14 "a critical opportunity for changing societal behavior because
15 nearly the entire population is engaged in this institution for
16 many years, starting at an early and formative period" and
17 "universal school-based violence prevention programs represent
18 an important means of reducing violent and aggressive behavior
19 in the United States"; and

20 WHEREAS, On March 25, 2013, House Resolution No. 191, which
21 declared youth violence a public health epidemic and supported
22 the establishment of Statewide trauma-informed education, was
23 introduced in the House of Representatives; and

24 WHEREAS, On April 22, 2013, House Resolution No. 191 received
25 consideration on the House floor and was adopted by the House
26 chamber by a vote of 187-9; and

27 WHEREAS, On September 19, 2016, in response to the call to
28 action outlined in House Resolution No. 191, a team of
29 stakeholders from the Pennsylvania Department of Education
30 joined 14 other states in attending a White House summit titled

1 Trauma-Informed Approaches in Schools; and

2 WHEREAS, Following the Pennsylvania Department of Education's
3 participation at the White House summit titled Trauma-Informed
4 Approaches in Schools, the department has subsequently provided
5 Pennsylvania-based educators with critically important trauma
6 information and related resources on its publicly accessible
7 Internet website; and

8 WHEREAS, Although a great degree of progress has been made in
9 the way of effectively addressing youth violence and
10 establishing Statewide trauma-informed education, there still
11 exists a need to highlight that these two issues are
12 inextricably linked to one another and that it is in the best
13 interests of this Commonwealth and the Department of Education
14 to make these issues a priority during the 2019-2020 legislative
15 session and beyond; therefore be it

16 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives declare youth
17 violence as a public health epidemic and support the
18 establishment of Statewide trauma-informed education.