
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 399 Session of
2019

INTRODUCED BY O'MARA, CALTAGIRONE, JOHNSON-HARRELL, FRANKEL,
WILLIAMS, SANCHEZ, RABB, KENYATTA, HILL-EVANS, NEILSON,
SCHLOSSBERG, McCLINTON, T. DAVIS, KINSEY, MADDEN, OTTEN,
SCHWEYER, KORTZ, YOUNGBLOOD AND GILLEN, JUNE 12, 2019

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, JUNE 12, 2019

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the Commonwealth to adopt and utilize sensitive language
2 related to suicide.

3 WHEREAS, Suicide is defined as someone taking his or her own
4 life with conscious intent by lethal means such as a firearm,
5 poisoning, suffocation or other self-injury; and

6 WHEREAS, Approximately 1,970 Pennsylvanians die by suicide
7 each year; and

8 WHEREAS, The suicide rate in Pennsylvania increased by 34%
9 between 1999 and 2016; and

10 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania's suicide rate of 16.3 per 100,000
11 people is higher than the national average of 15.4 per 100,000
12 people; and

13 WHEREAS, Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in
14 Pennsylvania; and

15 WHEREAS, Suicide is the second leading cause of death for
16 individuals from 15 to 34 years of age in Pennsylvania; and

17 WHEREAS, Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for

1 individuals from 35 to 54 years of age in Pennsylvania; and

2 WHEREAS, Suicide is the eighth leading cause of death for
3 individuals from 55 to 64 years of age in Pennsylvania; and

4 WHEREAS, Suicide is the 17th leading cause of death for
5 individuals 65 years of age or older in Pennsylvania; and

6 WHEREAS, Nearly three times as many individuals die by
7 suicide in Pennsylvania annually than by homicide; and

8 WHEREAS, The total deaths to suicide reflect a total of
9 37,335 years of potential life lost before 65 years of age; and

10 WHEREAS, Due to the stigma, it is suspected that suicide
11 generally is underreported; and

12 WHEREAS, Prevention, education, advocacy, public policy and
13 community support are keys to addressing suicide stigma; and

14 WHEREAS, The sensitive use of suicide-related language is
15 also essential to eliminating suicide stigma; and

16 WHEREAS, The term "committed suicide" implies a level of
17 criminality while "completed suicide" implies earlier attempts
18 when there may have been none; and

19 WHEREAS, Both terms perpetuate the stigma associated with
20 suicide and are strongly discouraged; and

21 WHEREAS, Using the word "successful" or "failed" to describe
22 suicide is also discouraged; and

23 WHEREAS, "Died by suicide" or "died of suicide" as well as
24 "suicide death" and "fatal suicide behavior" are recommended
25 language; therefore be it

26 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives urge the
27 Commonwealth to adopt and utilize recommended language related
28 to suicide; and be it further

29 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives urge adoption and
30 utilization of recommended language related to suicide by

1 executive branch agencies and the judiciary in regulations,
2 policies, reports and other documents in print or electronic
3 format; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That, for purposes of this resolution, recommended
5 language related to suicide means language that does not
6 perpetuate the stigma of suicide or imply criminality when
7 reporting a death by suicide; and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to
9 the Governor, the Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme
10 Court, each Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and the
11 court's officers and administrators.