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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 196 Session of  
2019

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INTRODUCED BY COSTA, HAYWOOD, STREET, HUGHES, BREWSTER, LEACH,  
SCHWANK, TARTAGLIONE AND YUDICHAK, SEPTEMBER 19, 2019

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REFERRED TO URBAN AFFAIRS AND HOUSING, SEPTEMBER 19, 2019

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A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to  
2 conduct a study and issue a report on the impact of housing  
3 on health in this Commonwealth.

4 WHEREAS, Housing quality includes the physical condition of a  
5 home, adequate and appropriate utility service, the  
6 characteristics of the area in which a home is located and a  
7 home's affordability; and

8 WHEREAS, Housing is considered affordable when it costs less  
9 than 30% of a family's income; and

10 WHEREAS, Nearly 1.5 million Pennsylvania households spend  
11 more than 30% of their income on housing; and

12 WHEREAS, Nearly 29% of children in this Commonwealth live in  
13 cost-burdened households; and

14 WHEREAS, The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia reports a  
15 Statewide shortage of 253,981 rental homes that are both  
16 affordable and available to people at or below 30% of median  
17 family income, often leading to homelessness; and

18 WHEREAS, People experiencing homelessness are more likely to

1 have health problems than those who are well-housed; and

2 WHEREAS, Inadequate nutrition and medical care are associated  
3 with the lack of access to affordable housing; and

4 WHEREAS, Residents of highly impoverished, unsafe  
5 neighborhoods have an increased likelihood of adverse physical  
6 and mental health effects; and

7 WHEREAS, Substandard housing propagates infectious diseases  
8 through contaminated water, poor waste disposal systems and  
9 unsanitary conditions; and

10 WHEREAS, Substandard housing increases the risk of burns and  
11 other injuries from exposed or unconventional heating sources,  
12 unguarded windows and sills, broken glass, obsolete fixtures and  
13 other hazards; and

14 WHEREAS, Children and senior citizens are particularly  
15 vulnerable to the health effects of substandard housing; and

16 WHEREAS, More than 1,300 elderly Pennsylvanians have died  
17 from accidental falls in unsafe houses; and

18 WHEREAS, Dampness, unfiltered air, poor ventilation, a lack  
19 of heat and unclean or unsafe flooring contribute to respiratory  
20 and pulmonary conditions, including asthma; and

21 WHEREAS, Homes that are poorly weatherized or lack adequate  
22 utility service can contribute to ill health; and

23 WHEREAS, Statewide, 40% of the houses tested for radon have  
24 high levels of the carcinogenic gas; and

25 WHEREAS, Older houses are a source of childhood lead exposure  
26 and lead poisoning; and

27 WHEREAS, Because Pennsylvania has the second largest number  
28 of pre-1950 houses in the nation, lead remains a health hazard  
29 in our communities; and

30 WHEREAS, A growing number of agencies and organizations

1 support research showing the direct effects of housing quality  
2 on health; and

3 WHEREAS, The United States Department of Housing and Urban  
4 Development, the Pennsylvania Safe and Healthy Homes Program,  
5 the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Commission to Build a  
6 Healthier America, the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania, the  
7 Center for Housing Policy, the Urban Institute, the Brookings  
8 Institute and the Healthy Rowhouse Project are among these  
9 entities; and

10 WHEREAS, Health care plans and providers in several states,  
11 including Texas, Arizona and Pennsylvania, are working to  
12 improve health care outcomes through housing; and

13 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania has begun to explore solutions through  
14 the Department of Community and Economic Development's  
15 Neighborhood Assistance Program; and

16 WHEREAS, The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC),  
17 Allegheny Health Network and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia  
18 are developing initiatives integrating housing and health; and

19 WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and  
20 Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund provides significant aid to  
21 households below 50% of median income and has made substantial  
22 contributions to improving the housing stock and health of  
23 thousands of Pennsylvanians; and

24 WHEREAS, Current State-specific data is required to better  
25 provide for housing and health benefits in this Commonwealth;  
26 therefore be it

27 RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the Legislative Budget and  
28 Finance Committee to conduct a study and issue a report on the  
29 impact of housing on health in this Commonwealth; and be it  
30 further

1       RESOLVED, That the study include background information and  
2 data relating to housing conditions, including access to utility  
3 service, and health effects described in this resolution, a  
4 review of health-related housing initiatives across the nation  
5 and any other information or data deemed necessary or  
6 appropriate; and be it further

7       RESOLVED, That the study include an analysis of the cost of  
8 health expenditures related to unmet housing needs, including  
9 Medicaid, Medicare and unreimbursed care provided by hospitals;  
10 and be it further

11       RESOLVED, That the study include an analysis of the health  
12 care cost savings achievable through addressing unmet housing  
13 needs; and be it further

14       RESOLVED, That the study include an analysis of the efficacy  
15 of particular interventions to address unmet housing needs,  
16 improve health outcomes and reduce health care expenditures; and  
17 be it further

18       RESOLVED, That, in conducting the study, the committee  
19 consult other departments, agencies, organizations, entities or  
20 persons as necessary or appropriate; and be it further

21       RESOLVED, That the committee issue a report of its findings  
22 and recommendations to the Senate within one year of the  
23 adoption of this resolution.