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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 72 Session of  
2021

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INTRODUCED BY STURLA, SANCHEZ, HILL-EVANS, MADDEN, SCHLOSSBERG,  
FREEMAN, PASHINSKI, SCHWEYER, NEILSON, CIRESI AND KINKEAD,  
MARCH 8, 2021

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, MARCH 8, 2021

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A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a  
2 comprehensive study to find an age-appropriate measuring tool  
3 that could be used by the 500 school districts in this  
4 Commonwealth to measure childhood trauma.

5 WHEREAS, Research over the last two decades in the evolving  
6 fields of neuroscience, molecular biology, public health,  
7 genomics and epigenetics reveals that experiences in the first  
8 few years of life build changes into the biology of the human  
9 body that, in turn, influence an individual's physical and  
10 mental health over his or her lifetime; and

11 WHEREAS, Adverse childhood experiences can have a profound  
12 effect on a child's developing brain and body and can result in  
13 poor health during the individual's adulthood; and

14 WHEREAS, An adverse childhood experience may include any of  
15 the following:

- 16 (1) Physical, emotional or sexual abuse.  
17 (2) Physical or emotional neglect.  
18 (3) Household dysfunction, including substance abuse, an

1 untreated mental illness, incarceration of a household  
2 member, domestic violence or separation or divorce involving  
3 household members;

4 and

5 WHEREAS, The original Adverse Childhood Experiences Study  
6 from 1998, which surveyed approximately 17,000 individuals,  
7 found that two-thirds of participants had at least one adverse  
8 childhood experience and one in six participants had four or  
9 more adverse childhood experiences; and

10 WHEREAS, The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study also found a  
11 strong correlation between the number of adverse childhood  
12 experiences and an individual's risk for disease and negative  
13 health behaviors; and

14 WHEREAS, Researchers found that an individual with four or  
15 more adverse childhood experiences was 2.4 times more likely to  
16 have a stroke, 2.2 times more likely to have ischemic heart  
17 disease, 1.9 times more likely to have a type of cancer and 1.6  
18 times more likely to have diabetes; and

19 WHEREAS, Researchers found that an individual with four or  
20 more adverse childhood experiences was 12.2 times more likely  
21 to attempt suicide, 10.3 times more likely to use injection  
22 drugs and 7.4 times more likely to be an alcoholic; and

23 WHEREAS, The life expectancy of an individual with six or  
24 more adverse childhood experiences is 20 years shorter than an  
25 individual with no adverse childhood experiences; and

26 WHEREAS, Adverse childhood experiences literally shape the  
27 physical architecture of a child's developing brain and  
28 establish a fragile foundation for learning, health and behavior  
29 outcomes that occur in succeeding years; and

30 WHEREAS, Strong, frequent or prolonged stress in childhood

1 caused by adverse childhood experiences can become toxic stress  
2 and impact the development of a child's fundamental brain  
3 architecture and stress response systems; and

4 WHEREAS, Early childhood offers a unique window of  
5 opportunity to prevent and heal the impacts of adverse  
6 childhood experiences and toxic stress on a child's brain and  
7 body; and

8 WHEREAS, A child's brain continues to develop through  
9 adolescence and into young adulthood; and

10 WHEREAS, The emerging science and research on toxic stress  
11 and adverse childhood experiences evidence a growing public  
12 health crisis for this Commonwealth's educational, juvenile  
13 justice, criminal justice and public health systems; and

14 WHEREAS, Adverse childhood experiences can significantly  
15 impact a child's success in education; and

16 WHEREAS, The Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative found that  
17 neurobiological, epigenetics and psychological studies have  
18 shown that traumatic experiences in childhood and adolescence  
19 can diminish concentration, memory and organizational and  
20 language abilities that a student needs to succeed in school;  
21 and

22 WHEREAS, Traumatic experiences in childhood and adolescence  
23 can negatively impact a student's academic performance and  
24 classroom behavior and the ability of a student to form  
25 relationships; and

26 WHEREAS, A child with four or more adverse childhood  
27 experiences is 46 times more likely to have learning or  
28 emotional problems; and

29 WHEREAS, A woman with seven or more adverse childhood  
30 experiences is 5.5 times more likely to become pregnant as a

1 teenager; and

2 WHEREAS, Adverse childhood experiences can affect a child's  
3 future contact with the criminal justice system; and

4 WHEREAS, A woman with three violent adverse childhood  
5 experiences is 3.5 times more likely to become the victim of  
6 intimate partner violence; and

7 WHEREAS, A man with three violent adverse childhood  
8 experiences is 3.8 times more likely to perpetrate intimate  
9 partner violence; and

10 WHEREAS, A critical factor in buffering a child from the  
11 effects of toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences is the  
12 existence of supportive and stable relationships between the  
13 child and his or her family, caregivers and other important  
14 adults in the child's life; and

15 WHEREAS, Positively influencing the architecture of a child's  
16 developing brain is more effective and less costly than  
17 attempting to correct poor learning, health and behaviors later  
18 in life; therefore be it

19 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the Joint  
20 State Government Commission to conduct a comprehensive study to  
21 find an age-appropriate measuring tool that could be used by the  
22 500 school districts in this Commonwealth to measure adverse  
23 childhood experiences and childhood trauma; and be it further

24 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission analyze  
25 how school systems in other states are measuring and tracking  
26 trauma; and be it further

27 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission conduct  
28 a thorough and comprehensive study of existing school programs  
29 that prevent and address adverse childhood experiences and  
30 childhood trauma; and be it further

1       RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission conduct  
2 a thorough and comprehensive study of the impact of the  
3 Pennsylvania Youth Survey and analyze its impact as a potential  
4 mechanism to measure and track trauma; and be it further

5       RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission, as part  
6 of its study, establish an advisory committee consisting of all  
7 of the following members:

8           (1) The Secretary of Education or a designee.

9           (2) The Secretary of Health or a designee.

10          (3) The Secretary of Human Services or a designee.

11          (4) The Attorney General or a designee.

12          (5) The chair of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime  
13 and Delinquency or a designee.

14          (6) A representative from the National Association of  
15 Social Workers-Pennsylvania Chapter.

16          (7) A representative from the Office of Child  
17 Development and Early Learning.

18          (8) A representative from the Pennsylvania Association  
19 of Intermediate Units.

20          (9) A representative from the Pennsylvania Association  
21 of School Administrators.

22          (10) A representative from the Pennsylvania Association  
23 of School Nurses and Practitioners.

24          (11) A representative from the Pennsylvania Chapter,  
25 American Academy of Pediatrics.

26          (12) A representative from the Pennsylvania State  
27 Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of  
28 Colored People.

29          (13) A representative from the Pennsylvania Parent  
30 Teacher Association.

1           (14) A representative from the Pennsylvania  
2 Psychological Association.

3           (15) A representative from the Pennsylvania School  
4 Boards Association.

5           (16) A representative from the Pennsylvania School  
6 Counselors Association.

7           (17) A representative from the Pennsylvania State  
8 Education Association.

9           (18) Representatives from other departments or agencies  
10 of the Commonwealth or other entities that the Joint State  
11 Government Commission deems appropriate in conducting the  
12 study;

13 and be it further

14       RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission form the  
15 advisory committee within three months of the adoption of this  
16 resolution; and be it further

17       RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission, in  
18 collaboration with the advisory committee, submit a report of  
19 the Joint State Government Commission's findings, along with any  
20 statutory or regulatory recommendations, to the General Assembly  
21 within one year of the adoption of this resolution; and be it  
22 further

23       RESOLVED, That, at a minimum, the report include all of the  
24 following information:

25           (1) The recommended mechanism for schools to use to  
26 measure trauma.

27           (2) Recommendations on how to continue tracking trauma  
28 in school districts.

29           (3) Mechanisms that school systems in other states are  
30 using to measure and track trauma.