

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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# HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 112      Session of  
                  2021

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INTRODUCED BY ISAACSON, DELLOSCO, HILL-EVANS, HOHENSTEIN, SANCHEZ  
AND SCHLOSSBERG, JUNE 8, 2021

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, JUNE 8, 2021

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A RESOLUTION

1     Urging Congress to address statelessness by accepting and  
2       acknowledging the international customary definition of a  
3       stateless person and adopting legislation to protect  
4       stateless persons on United States territory and provide them  
5       the right to adjust status and a path to citizenship.

6     WHEREAS, An individual's citizenship or nationality is  
7       generally determined based on the laws of the country in which  
8       they were born or the nationality of the individual's parents;  
9       and

10      WHEREAS, A "stateless person" is a person who is not  
11       considered as a national by any state under the operation of its  
12       law; and

13      WHEREAS, Statelessness can be caused by numerous factors,  
14       including failure to properly register newborns, the lack of  
15       financial ability to cover the cost of registration and birth  
16       certificates, customs and traditional attitudes about birth  
17       registration, birth to stateless parents, political change and  
18       transfer of territory, administrative oversights, procedural  
19       problems, conflicts of law between two countries or destruction

1 of official records, alteration of nationality during marriage  
2 or the dissolution of marriage between couples from different  
3 countries, targeted discrimination against minorities, laws  
4 restricting acquisition of citizenship, laws restricting the  
5 rights of women to pass on their nationality to their children,  
6 laws relating to children born out of wedlock and during transit  
7 or loss or relinquishment of nationality without first acquiring  
8 another; and

9 WHEREAS, In 2014, the United Nations High Commissioner for  
10 Refugees estimated there are more than 10 million stateless  
11 persons internationally; and

12 WHEREAS, A stateless person can and does face numerous  
13 hardships that impact their work and personal life; and

14 WHEREAS, Without citizenship, stateless people have no legal  
15 protection or right to vote and usually lack access to  
16 education, employment, health care and a multitude of other  
17 fundamental rights; and

18 WHEREAS, Stateless persons may also experience travel  
19 restrictions, social exclusion and heightened vulnerability to  
20 sexual and physical violence, exploitation, trafficking in  
21 persons, forcible displacement and other abuses; and

22 WHEREAS, Currently, the United States is estimated to have  
23 more than 200,000 stateless people and does not make  
24 determinations about whether someone is stateless; and

25 WHEREAS, If a person is stateless, there is no benefit or  
26 status provided to them under Federal law; and

27 WHEREAS, If a stateless person in the United States is  
28 ordered removed, they may face an inability to obtain travel  
29 documents, a long-term family separation or the possibility of  
30 being held in immigration detention for months or longer, as

1 well as other significant hardships; and

2 WHEREAS, Because the United States lacks a consistent legal  
3 framework for recognizing statelessness and addressing the  
4 specific political and economic needs of those individuals,  
5 stateless persons in deportation proceedings are often treated  
6 in the same manner as other non-United States citizens, even  
7 though stateless persons have no country to which they can be  
8 deported; and

9 WHEREAS, Allowing a person to have a nationality, meaning a  
10 legal bond between a person and a country, allows them to have a  
11 sense of identity, belonging and the ability to exercise a wide  
12 range of rights; and

13 WHEREAS, The 1954 Convention relating to the Status of  
14 Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of  
15 Statelessness outlined the actions necessary to identify and to  
16 reduce statelessness, yet not all states have adopted the  
17 necessary changes to eradicate statelessness; and

18 WHEREAS, Creating awareness is the first step to preventing  
19 statelessness and mitigating the harm faced by millions of  
20 stateless people; and

21 WHEREAS, Identifying stateless populations and providing  
22 stateless persons with universal birth registration and other  
23 forms of civil documentation can help minimize the issue; and

24 WHEREAS, Eliminating discrimination in nationality laws and  
25 building administrative capacity for civil registry would  
26 increase a stateless individual's access to naturalization or  
27 citizenship in a country; and

28 WHEREAS, Nations such as Spain and France issue residency  
29 permits to those deemed stateless while Sweden grants special  
30 status to foreigners in need of protection who are unable to

1 return to their home country; and

2 WHEREAS, Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human  
3 Rights explicitly states that "everyone has the right to a  
4 nationality" and allowing for the occurrence of statelessness to  
5 continue directly violates international law; therefore be it

6 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the  
7 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania urge Congress to address  
8 statelessness by accepting and acknowledging the international  
9 customary definition of a stateless person and adopting  
10 legislation to protect stateless persons on United States  
11 territory and provide them the right to adjust status and a path  
12 to citizenship; and be it further

13 RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to  
14 the presiding officers of each house of Congress and to each  
15 member of Congress from Pennsylvania.