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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 131 Session of  
2021

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INTRODUCED BY KIRKLAND, KENYATTA, SANCHEZ, FREEMAN, KINSEY,  
SCHLOSSBERG, MERSKI, HILL-EVANS, SCHWEYER, DeLUCA,  
HOHENSTEIN, HOWARD, LEE AND A. DAVIS, AUGUST 11, 2021

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, AUGUST 11, 2021

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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 \$20 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  
9 violence youths are currently exposed to, measures should be  
10 taken to 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 2021-2022 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.