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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 221 Session of  
2022

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INTRODUCED BY ISAACSON, HENNESSEY, PARKER, SANCHEZ, DELLOSO,  
KINSEY, MADDEN AND HOWARD, JULY 18, 2022

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, JULY 18, 2022

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A RESOLUTION

1 Establishing a task force to study social media platforms and  
2 websites on which suicide is encouraged.

3 WHEREAS, Every suicide is an avoidable tragedy; and

4 WHEREAS, Suicide rates have risen in the United States over  
5 the past 20 years, from 10.7 deaths per 100,000 in 2000, to 14  
6 deaths per 100,000 in 2019; and

7 WHEREAS, Suicides have risen in nearly every American age  
8 cohort, but especially among those 15 to 24 years of age, with a  
9 45% increase since 2009; and

10 WHEREAS, Over the past several years, web forums have been  
11 established where individuals discuss and encourage suicide; and

12 WHEREAS, These websites can be easily accessed through online  
13 search engines; and

14 WHEREAS, Forty-five individuals have been confirmed to have  
15 killed themselves after accessing one particular suicide forum;  
16 and

17 WHEREAS, One of these suicide victims was a Pennsylvania  
18 resident; and

1       WHEREAS, The House of Representatives has an interest in  
2 preventing suicide through policy in order to promote the health  
3 and well-being of Pennsylvanians; and

4       WHEREAS, It is important that websites where suicide is  
5 encouraged are studied to determine what actions the  
6 Commonwealth can take to prevent suicides stemming from these  
7 websites; and

8       WHEREAS, There are a series of complications in regulating  
9 websites where suicide is encouraged, including:

10           (1) freedom of expression concerns, as several state  
11 courts have found encouraging others to commit suicide is  
12 protected speech under the First Amendment; and

13           (2) the server for such websites moving frequently among  
14 various jurisdictions to avoid government interference;  
15 and

16       WHEREAS, The House of Representatives desires advice on  
17 legislation from a wide range of sources on how to regulate  
18 social media platforms and websites where suicide is encouraged;  
19 therefore be it

20       RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives establish a task  
21 force to study social media platforms and websites on which  
22 suicide is encouraged; and be it further

23       RESOLVED, That the task force be comprised of the following  
24 members:

25           (1) the Attorney General, as chair of the task force;

26           (2) the Secretary of Health, or a designee;

27           (3) the Secretary of Human Services, or a designee;

28           (4) the chair and minority chair of the Judiciary

29 Committee of the House of Representatives, or their

30 designees;

1           (5) the chair and minority chair of the Health Committee  
2 of the House of Representatives, or their designees;

3           (6) the chair and minority chair of the Human Services  
4 Committee of the House of Representatives, or their  
5 designees;

6           (7) two clinical psychologists with experience working  
7 with suicidal patients, as appointed by the Governor;

8           (8) two experts in cyberbullying, as appointed by the  
9 Governor; and

10          (9) two suicide prevention advocates, as appointed by  
11 the Governor;

12 and be it further

13         RESOLVED, That the task force issue a report within two years  
14 of the adoption of this resolution with recommendations for  
15 legislative and executive actions to prevent individuals from  
16 committing suicide after visiting online forums where suicide is  
17 encouraged.