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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 159 Session of  
2021

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INTRODUCED BY COSTA, KANE, FONTANA, HUGHES, SAVAL, SCAVELLO,  
COMITTA, CAPPELLETTI, KEARNEY AND SANTARSIERO,  
AUGUST 27, 2021

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REFERRED TO URBAN AFFAIRS AND HOUSING, AUGUST 27, 2021

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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, An individual who identifies as an ethnic minority  
15 is more likely to live in unaffordable housing, which means the  
16 individual is also more likely to face associated health  
17 challenges; and

18 WHEREAS, The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia reports a

1 Statewide shortage of 253,981 rental homes that are both  
2 affordable and available to people at or below 30% of median  
3 family income, often leading to homelessness; and

4 WHEREAS, People experiencing homelessness are more likely to  
5 have health problems than those who are well-housed; and

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

8 WHEREAS, Residents of highly impoverished, unsafe  
9 neighborhoods have an increased likelihood of adverse physical  
10 and mental health effects; and

11 WHEREAS, Substandard housing propagates infectious diseases  
12 through contaminated water, poor waste disposal systems and  
13 unsanitary conditions; and

14 WHEREAS, Substandard housing increases the risk of burns and  
15 other injuries from exposed or unconventional heating sources,  
16 unguarded windows and sills, broken glass, obsolete fixtures and  
17 other hazards; and

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

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

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

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

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

29 WHEREAS, Older houses are a source of childhood lead exposure  
30 and lead poisoning; and

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

4       WHEREAS, A growing number of agencies and organizations  
5 support research showing the direct effects of housing quality  
6 on health; and

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

14       WHEREAS, Health care plans and providers in several states,  
15 including Texas, Arizona and Pennsylvania, are working to  
16 improve health care outcomes through housing; and

17       WHEREAS, Pennsylvania has begun to explore solutions through  
18 the Department of Community and Economic Development's  
19 Neighborhood Assistance Program; and

20       WHEREAS, The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center,  
21 Allegheny Health Network and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia  
22 are developing initiatives integrating housing and health; and

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

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

1 RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the Legislative Budget and  
2 Finance Committee to conduct a study and issue a report on the  
3 impact of housing on health in this Commonwealth; and be it  
4 further

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

11 RESOLVED, That the study include an analysis of the cost of  
12 health expenditures related to unmet housing needs, including  
13 Medicaid, Medicare and unreimbursed care provided by hospitals;  
14 and be it further

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

18 RESOLVED, That the study include an analysis of the efficacy  
19 of particular interventions to address unmet housing needs,  
20 improve health outcomes and reduce health care expenditures; and  
21 be it further

22 RESOLVED, That the study include an analysis of disaggregated  
23 sociodemographic data related to health and housing; and be it  
24 further

25 RESOLVED, That the analyzed disaggregated sociodemographic  
26 data be made publicly available on Open Data Pennsylvania; and  
27 be it further

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

1       RESOLVED, That the committee solicit input from other  
2 departments, agencies, organizations, entities or persons on  
3 barriers to, and best practices for, collecting demographic  
4 data; and be it further

5       RESOLVED, That the committee issue a report of its findings  
6 and recommendations to the Senate within one year of the  
7 adoption of this resolution; and be it further

8       RESOLVED, That the committee's report of its findings and  
9 recommendations include policy changes that the collected  
10 demographic data indicates are necessary to reduce disparities.