
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 345 Session of
2019

INTRODUCED BY STURLA, HARKINS, McCLINTON, FRANKEL, A. DAVIS,
MERSKI, ULLMAN, SCHLOSSBERG, OTTEN, ROEBUCK, READSHAW AND
HILL-EVANS, MAY 15, 2019

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, MAY 15, 2019

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
6 evolving fields of neuroscience, molecular biology, public
7 health, genomics and epigenetics reveals that experiences in the
8 first few years of life build changes into the biology of the
9 human 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
7 individuals, found that two-thirds of participants had at least
8 one adverse childhood experience and one in six participants had
9 four or 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
27 the 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

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

4 WHEREAS, Early childhood offers a unique window
5 of 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
9 through adolescence and into young adulthood; and

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

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

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

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

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

30 WHEREAS, A woman with seven or more adverse

1 childhood experiences is 5.5 times more likely to become
2 pregnant as a teenager; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 childhood trauma; and be it further

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

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

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

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

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

12 (4) The Attorney General or a designee.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

30 (13) A representative from the Pennsylvania Parent

1 Teacher Association.

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

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

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

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

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

14 and be it further

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

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

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

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

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

30 (3) Mechanisms that school systems in other states are

1 using to measure and track trauma.