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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 837 Session of  
2018

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INTRODUCED BY GAINNEY, DAVIS, DEAN, STEPHENS, MURT, SCHLOSSBERG,  
A. DAVIS, KINSEY, MENTZER, FRANKEL, WHEATLEY, P. COSTA,  
NEILSON, YOUNGBLOOD, KIRKLAND, DRISCOLL, HILL-EVANS,  
CALTAGIRONE, WATSON AND DONATUCCI, APRIL 16, 2018

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, APRIL 16, 2018

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A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to establish an  
2 advisory committee to conduct a study on gun violence as a  
3 public health crisis and issue a report of its findings and  
4 recommendations to the House of Representatives.

5 WHEREAS, Gun violence is more prevalent in the United States  
6 than almost any other nation on earth; and

7 WHEREAS, Every day in the United States, more than 400  
8 individuals are killed or injured by a firearm, amounting to  
9 approximately one individual every three and one-half minutes;

10 and

11 WHEREAS, The gun homicide rate in the United States is 25  
12 times higher than in other developed nations; and

13 WHEREAS, The firearm homicide rate in the United States is  
14 approximately 43 times higher for individuals who are 15 to 24  
15 years of age than in other developed nations; and

16 WHEREAS, The rate of unintentional firearm deaths is 6.2  
17 times higher in the United States than in other developed  
18 nations; and

1       WHEREAS, According to the American Public Health Association  
2 (APHA), gun violence in the United States took the lives of  
3 approximately 33,000 Americans in 2016, and, in addition,  
4 approximately 85,000 other Americans sustained injuries from  
5 firearms; and

6       WHEREAS, In 2016, gun violence cost the United States  
7 approximately \$229 billion, including health care, law  
8 enforcement, insurance, employment and other costs; and

9       WHEREAS, In the Federal Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations  
10 Bill for Fiscal Year 1997, the Dickey amendment required that  
11 "none of the funds made available for injury prevention and  
12 control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may be  
13 used to advocate or promote gun control"; and

14       WHEREAS, The Dickey amendment has prevented the Centers for  
15 Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from researching gun  
16 violence as it would normally research an epidemic with the same  
17 threat to public health, safety and welfare as gun violence; and

18       WHEREAS, Under the Dickey amendment, the Congress of the  
19 United States also redirected \$2.6 million from the CDC's  
20 budget, the amount of money that the CDC had invested in firearm  
21 injury research during the previous year; and

22       WHEREAS, A number of organizations have proposed repeal of  
23 the Dickey amendment and treating gun violence as a public  
24 health crisis, but these proposals have not been successful at  
25 the Federal level; and

26       WHEREAS, Since 1996, the CDC's funding for firearm injury  
27 prevention has decreased 96% to \$100,000 out of the total CDC  
28 budget of \$5.6 billion; and

29       WHEREAS, In 2012, former United States Representative Jay  
30 Dickey, the author of the Dickey amendment, announced that he

1 had changed his mind and now opposes his own amendment, stating  
2 that:

3 We are in strong agreement now that scientific research  
4 should be conducted into preventing firearm injuries and  
5 that ways to prevent firearm deaths can be found without  
6 encroaching on the rights of legitimate gun owners. The  
7 same evidence-based approach that is saving millions of  
8 lives from motor-vehicle crashes, as well as from  
9 smoking, cancer and HIV/AIDS, can help reduce the toll of  
10 deaths and injuries from gun violence;

11 and

12 WHEREAS, The APHA suggests that, similar to how public health  
13 officials investigate a communicable disease, researchers should  
14 investigate the underlying causes of the gun violence epidemic,  
15 how it is transmitted and what potential remedies exist; and

16 WHEREAS, In 2015, a group of eight national health  
17 professional organizations and the American Bar Association  
18 (ABA) advocated a series of policies to reduce the public health  
19 consequences of firearms, including:

20 universal background checks of gun purchasers,  
21 elimination of physician 'gag' laws, restricting the  
22 manufacture and sale of military-style assault weapons  
23 and large-capacity magazines for civilian use and  
24 research to support strategies for reducing firearm-  
25 related injuries and death;

26 and

27 WHEREAS, The health professional organizations also  
28 recommended improved monetary assistance for mental health  
29 services; and

30 WHEREAS, The ABA concluded that none of these recommendations

1 for reducing gun violence conflict with the Second Amendment of  
2 the Constitution of the United States; and

3 WHEREAS, Millions of guns are sold every year in "no  
4 questions asked" transactions; and

5 WHEREAS, It is estimated that 40% of guns sold in the United  
6 States are sold without a meaningful background check; and

7 WHEREAS, Violent behavior due to a mental health disorder  
8 accounts for only about 4% to 5% of gun violence; and

9 WHEREAS, More than 60% of all firearm deaths are suicides;  
10 and

11 WHEREAS, African Americans are nearly 15 times more likely to  
12 die from gun violence than white Americans; and

13 WHEREAS, A person is killed with a gun every six hours in  
14 this Commonwealth; and

15 WHEREAS, Approximately 79% of all victims of gun homicides in  
16 this Commonwealth are Hispanic or African American; and

17 WHEREAS, While African Americans comprise just under 12% of  
18 the population in this Commonwealth, they account for more than  
19 69% of gun homicide victims in this Commonwealth; and

20 WHEREAS, These statistics indicate that gun violence is a  
21 threat to public health and safety in communities of color; and

22 WHEREAS, In schools from Columbine, 1999, to Virginia Tech,  
23 2007, to Sandy Hook, 2012, to Parkland, 2018, and other school  
24 shootings nationwide since Columbine, the lives of hundreds of  
25 students and school employees have been lost to the epidemic of  
26 gun violence; and

27 WHEREAS, According to a 2017 article in the journal  
28 *Pediatrics*, nearly 1,300 children from 0 to 17 years of age  
29 across the United States die from shootings annually, and 5,790  
30 are treated for gunshot wounds; and

1       WHEREAS, Schools in this Commonwealth nationwide remain  
2 vulnerable to gun violence; and

3       WHEREAS, From 2005 to 2014, this Commonwealth had the fifth  
4 highest number of assaults with a firearm against a police  
5 officer per capita; and

6       WHEREAS, In this Commonwealth on average, a police officer is  
7 assaulted with a firearm every two days; and

8       WHEREAS, Currently in this Commonwealth, gun-related deaths  
9 exceed vehicle-related deaths every year; and

10       WHEREAS, From 2012 to 2014, this Commonwealth ranked eighth  
11 for the highest number of guns exported to other states and  
12 recovered in a crime scene; and

13       WHEREAS, From 2012 to 2014, a total of 5,844 guns sold in  
14 Pennsylvania were used in crimes in surrounding states;  
15 therefore be it

16       RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the Joint  
17 State Government Commission to establish an advisory committee  
18 to conduct a study on gun violence as a public health crisis and  
19 issue a report of its findings and recommendations to the House  
20 of Representatives; and be it further

21       RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission  
22 establish an advisory committee consisting of approximately 17  
23 members, including representatives of the following:

- 24           (1) the Office of Homeland Security of the Commonwealth;
- 25           (2) the Department of Education;
- 26           (3) the Department of Health;
- 27           (4) the Department of Human Services;
- 28           (5) the Pennsylvania State Police;
- 29           (6) the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and  
30 Delinquency;

1 (7) the Office of Attorney General; and

2 (8) other agencies, organizations or entities that are  
3 knowledgeable of the issues surrounding gun violence and its  
4 causes and effects on public health and safety, including  
5 representatives who are experienced in the areas of health  
6 care, law enforcement and criminal justice;

7 and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission consult  
9 with other departments, agencies, organizations, entities or  
10 persons, as necessary or appropriate, in seeking further input  
11 and information under this resolution; and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That the report of the Joint State Government  
13 Commission contain the following:

14 (1) findings and recommendations relating to:

15 (i) the background information and data described in  
16 this resolution;

17 (ii) the causes and prevalence of gun violence in  
18 this Commonwealth and throughout the United States; and

19 (iii) intervention and prevention techniques  
20 proposed, considered or implemented nationwide;

21 (2) any proposed legislation to reduce gun violence in  
22 this Commonwealth; and

23 (3) any other data or information determined to be  
24 necessary or appropriate;

25 and be it further

26 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission issue  
27 its report within one year of the adoption of this resolution.