
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 200 Session of 2003

INTRODUCED BY BEBKO-JONES, BELARDI, BELFANTI, BISHOP, CAPPELLI,
CAWLEY, COY, CREIGHTON, CURRY, DALEY, DeLUCA, DeWEESE,
FRANKEL, FREEMAN, GOODMAN, GRUCELA, HARHAI, HERSHEY, HORSEY,
JAMES, JOSEPHS, LAUGHLIN, LEACH, LEDERER, MAITLAND, McGEEHAN,
MELIO, PALLONE, PISTELLA, PRESTON, READSHAW, ROBERTS, ROONEY,
SAINATO, SATHER, SCHRODER, STABACK, TANGRETTI, E. Z. TAYLOR,
THOMAS, TRUE, WOJNAROSKI AND YOUNGBLOOD, APRIL 15, 2003

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON RULES, APRIL 15, 2003

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing youth mental illness and suicide as a State public
2 health crisis and encouraging evidence-based initiatives to
3 screen children and adolescents for mental disorders in order
4 to identify illness and prevent suicide among youth.

5 WHEREAS, Over the past 20 years, advances in scientific
6 research have changed the way society views children's mental
7 health, having learned that the same mental disorders which
8 afflict adults can also occur in children and adolescents; and

9 WHEREAS, Scientific research has demonstrated that early
10 identification and treatment of mental disorders in youth
11 greatly improves a child's or adolescent's prognosis; and

12 WHEREAS, In January 2001 the Surgeon General of the United
13 States noted that while one in ten young people in the United
14 States suffers from mental illness severe enough to cause some
15 level of impairment, only one in five of these children and
16 adolescents receives needed mental health treatment; and

1 WHEREAS, The World Health Organization has reported that

2 youth neuropsychiatric disorders will rise by more than 50% by
3 2020, making such disorders one of the top five causes of
4 disability, morbidity and mortality among children and
5 adolescents; and
6 WHEREAS, Psychological autopsy studies have found that 90% of
7 young people who end their own lives have depression or another
8 diagnosable mental or substance abuse disorder at the time of
9 their deaths, verifying a link between mental illness and
10 suicide; and
11 WHEREAS, In 1999 the Surgeon General first recognized that
12 mental illness and substance abuse disorders are, in fact, the
13 greatest risk factors for suicidal behavior and that properly
14 identifying and treating mental illness and substance abuse
15 disorders is an important part of suicide prevention activities;
16 and
17 WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
18 recently reported that in 2000 suicide was the third leading
19 cause of death among youth 15 to 24 years of age; and
20 WHEREAS, The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
21 Administration recently reported that in 1999 almost 3 million
22 young people were at risk for suicide but only 36% received
23 mental health treatment; and
24 WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has
25 reported that each year in the United States almost as many
26 adolescents and young adults commit suicide as die from all
27 natural causes such as leukemia, birth defects, pneumonia,
28 influenza and AIDS combined; and
29 WHEREAS, In January 2001 the Surgeon General issued a goal to
30 improve the assessment of and recognition of mental health needs
20030H0200R1376 - 2 -

1 in children, in part by encouraging early identification of
2 mental health needs in existing preschool, child care,
3 education, health, welfare, juvenile justice and substance abuse
4 treatment systems; and
5 WHEREAS, Several states have recognized youth mental illness
6 and suicide as a public health crisis, some prior to the United
7 States Department of Health and Human Services' initiative, and
8 as of today the majority of states have either developed or are
9 in the process of developing plans to identify mental illness
10 and prevent suicide among young people; and
11 WHEREAS, The efforts, initiatives and activities of Federal
12 and State government should be used to support evidence-based
13 practices for identifying mental illness in young people and
14 preventing suicide among this population; therefore be it
15 RESOLVED, That it is the sense of the House of
16 Representatives that youth mental illness and suicide are a
17 State public health crisis, and that the Governor, the General
18 Assembly, the Department of Health, the Department of Public
19 Welfare, the Department of Education, the Office of Attorney
20 General and all citizens should make the identification of
21 mental disorders and the prevention of suicide among young
22 people a public health priority; and be it further
23 RESOLVED, That it is the sense of the House of
24 Representatives that every child should be screened once in his
25 or her youth for mental illness in order to identify illness and
26 prevent suicide among young people; and be it further
27 RESOLVED, That it is the sense of the House of

28 Representatives that such a screening and identification process
29 should employ sound, evidence-based tools; and be it further
30 RESOLVED, That it is the sense of the House of
20030H0200R1376 - 3 -

1 Representatives that all middle school and high school-aged
2 youth should have equal access to these initiatives without
3 stigma.