

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 637 Session of
2019

INTRODUCED BY A. DAVIS, DECEMBER 16, 2019

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH, DECEMBER 16, 2019

A RESOLUTION

1 Setting forth the Commonwealth's policy on child well-being in
2 Pennsylvania and recognizing the urgent need for greater
3 father involvement in the lives of their children.

4 WHEREAS, Research shows that father involvement is associated
5 with greater child well-being; and

6 WHEREAS, Just like mothers, fathers have a lot to offer and
7 they are role models, caretakers, providers and advocates; and

8 WHEREAS, When a child has the benefit of access to both
9 mother and father, she or he is more likely to exhibit healthy
10 behaviors, excel in school and achieve emotional well-being; and

11 WHEREAS, Nationwide, according to the United States Census
12 Bureau, 31% of our children are living with either a single
13 parent or no parent at all, with 23% of children living with
14 their mother, 4% with their father and 4% with no parent; and

15 WHEREAS, Out of the 2.6 million children residing in
16 Pennsylvania, more than 886,000 are living in single-parent
17 households, with more than 690,000 of those households headed by
18 the mother and more than 196,000 households headed by the
19 father; and

WHEREAS, A near majority of children, 46%, in single-mother households are living in poverty; and

WHEREAS, In many Pennsylvania counties, this percentage exceeds 50%, compared to 7% of children living in poverty in married-couple households; and

WHEREAS, A major barrier to father involvement across Pennsylvania's social service systems is the failure to prioritize father-child involvement; and

WHEREAS, This failure permeates social service systems, including impacting the administration of justice and public safety, behavioral health, child support enforcement, early childhood development, education, employment and training, housing, supervised independent living and homelessness, parent education, supportive services and public health, as concluded by expert panel members assembled by The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated (the commission), Dads Resource Center (DRC) at State College, as well as the Pennsylvania Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC); and

WHEREAS, This failure results in a lack of concentration by direct service providers on services that strengthen bonds between mothers and fathers, a fundamental need for healthy development of children; and

WHEREAS, This failure results in policies and social delivery practices in systems that disadvantage fathers, including showing preference or bias in favor of mothers, and results in staff members not having the resources necessary to engage fathers, as doing so is not a program or agency priority; and

WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania took the lead among the states in enacting programs to promote children's healthcare by enacting beneficial initiatives, and the Commonwealth now

1 stands ready to review programs, work to remove systemic
2 barriers to greater father involvement and promote programs that
3 recognize that children flourish when their fathers are
4 meaningfully involved in their lives; therefore be it

5 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives set forth the
6 Commonwealth's policy on child well-being in Pennsylvania and
7 recognize the urgent need for greater father involvement in the
8 lives of their children; and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives agree that
10 prospective legislation regarding the Commonwealth's programs
11 and services to children and families will recognize, foster and
12 promote the value of fathers' contributions to the well-being of
13 children and families, identify and work to eliminate the
14 systemic barriers that inhibit that contribution and include
15 fathers in the service delivery models to the fullest extent
16 practical.