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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 905 Session of  
2020

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INTRODUCED BY PETRARCA, BOBACK, READSHAW, KINSEY, DeLUCA, ROZZI,  
FREEMAN, HOWARD, SCHWEYER, SANCHEZ, CIRESI, OTTEN, YOUNGBLOOD  
AND DEASY, JUNE 23, 2020

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY  
PREPAREDNESS, JUNE 23, 2020

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A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the Governor to classify child welfare workers and  
2 service providers as level 1 emergency responders.

3 WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented  
4 challenges for our health and human services systems in serving  
5 our most vulnerable families, children and youth; and

6 WHEREAS, The present crisis has prevented child welfare  
7 workers and service providers from making face-to-face  
8 connections with those they serve, which is a critical component  
9 of their work; and

10 WHEREAS, Limited in-person contact is particularly troubling  
11 for work in child welfare, including child protective services,  
12 foster care, transitional living for older youth and adoption;  
13 and

14 WHEREAS, When child welfare service providers are limited in  
15 their ability to meet with families directly in their homes or  
16 provider offices, the effectiveness of critical services  
17 designed to ensure child safety and help families address

1 barriers to successful reunification is compromised; and

2 WHEREAS, Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, reporting  
3 of suspected child maltreatment has declined; and

4 WHEREAS, According to the Department of Human Services, calls  
5 to ChildLine have decreased by 50% since schools shuttered and  
6 children were required to stay home; and

7 WHEREAS, Statistically, this decline is not indicative of a  
8 decline in rates of abuse or neglect; and

9 WHEREAS, Instead, higher stress levels of parents and  
10 caregivers from being at home all day with children, juggling  
11 work and being stand-in teachers, lack of support systems and  
12 higher rates of unemployment and poverty can cause higher rates  
13 of abuse and neglect; and

14 WHEREAS, While some allegations of child abuse and neglect  
15 continue to be reported, the investigation practices have been  
16 modified; and

17 WHEREAS, County workers have limited face-to-face contact  
18 unless the child abuse and neglect reports require it; and

19 WHEREAS, This new normal has made evident that child welfare  
20 workers and service providers working with children, youth and  
21 families are critical and essential employees and play a vital  
22 role in assisting child welfare and juvenile justice agencies in  
23 maintaining the safety and well-being of our children and youth;  
24 and

25 WHEREAS, These essential services help keep families intact,  
26 assist with successful reunification or permanency preparation  
27 and ensure that our most vulnerable can thrive even through  
28 difficult situations; and

29 WHEREAS, As stay-at-home orders are lifted and we resume some  
30 normalcy, it is important to recognize that access to personal

1 protective equipment (PPE) for those who serve one of our most  
2 vulnerable populations is critical; and

3 WHEREAS, Unfortunately, obtaining sufficient PPE for child  
4 welfare staff and service providers has been very difficult; and

5 WHEREAS, It is critical to do all within our power to ensure  
6 that our child welfare workers and service providers have the  
7 tools and equipment necessary to resume face-to-face visits in  
8 order to avoid tragedies such as serious maltreatment and child  
9 fatalities; therefore be it

10 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives urge the Governor  
11 to classify child welfare workers and service providers as level  
12 1 emergency responders and, thus, grant them greater access to  
13 PPE; and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives recognize that  
15 child welfare workers and service providers are critical and  
16 essential employees who play a vital role in assisting child  
17 welfare and juvenile justice agencies in maintaining the safety  
18 and well-being of one of our most vulnerable populations, our  
19 children and youth.