

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 80

Session of
2023

INTRODUCED BY KAZEEM, DELLOSO, BOROWSKI, CURRY, MADDEN, WAXMAN,
FLEMING, PARKER, CEPEDA-FREYTIZ, TAKAC, HILL-EVANS, FIEDLER,
SANCHEZ, GUENST, HANBIDGE, KHAN, SHUSTERMAN, N. NELSON,
HOWARD, CIRESI, D. WILLIAMS AND FREEMAN, APRIL 24, 2023

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH, APRIL 24, 2023

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a
2 study and issue a report on the best practices and
3 recommendations for the operation of juvenile detention
4 centers within this Commonwealth.

5 WHEREAS, A grand jury investigated abuse allegations at the
6 now closed Delaware County Juvenile Detention Center (DCJDC) and
7 found that the DCJDC "existed like a prison intent on
8 punishment, not reform, and allowed a dangerous, unprofessional
9 culture to pervade"; and

10 WHEREAS, The grand jury found that an extreme lack of
11 available activities led to residents spending "most of their
12 time in their rooms doing nothing"; and

13 WHEREAS, The grand jury found, based on witness testimony,
14 that although education should have been provided, "staff would
15 not always bring the juveniles to the classroom as required" and
16 "the school work was...frequently below the juveniles' actual
17 grade level"; and

18 WHEREAS, The grand jury found that the facility frequently

1 cursed at and bullied residents; and

2 WHEREAS, The grand jury found that the facility failed to
3 intervene in fights between residents and to deescalate episodes
4 effectively; and

5 WHEREAS, The grand jury heard testimony of sexually
6 inappropriate conduct by male detention staff, including making
7 sexually inappropriate comments to female residents and making
8 sexually inappropriate advances toward female staff members; and

9 WHEREAS, The grand jury found that "there has been no
10 comprehensive examination of best practices for operating secure
11 juvenile detention facilities," but "so long as there is a need
12 for such facilities to operate, there is a need to establish
13 standards for how they should operate consistently with the goal
14 of rehabilitation"; and

15 WHEREAS, The grand jury recommended that the General Assembly
16 make use of the Joint State Government Commission's research
17 ability to develop policies and practices; therefore be it

18 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the Joint
19 State Government Commission to conduct a study and issue a
20 report on the best practices and recommendations for the
21 operation of juvenile detention centers within this
22 Commonwealth, including:

23 (1) The implementation of total video surveillance of
24 the facility, excluding bedrooms and bathrooms, by a video
25 surveillance system with the capacity to store footage for a
26 minimum of 90 days and a requirement that a supervisor review
27 and preserve video footage whenever a physical restraint is
28 used by staff on a juvenile.

29 (2) Expanding the list of required training categories
30 beyond the requirements of the 3800-series regulations,

1 including training on deescalation techniques, handling
2 children with trauma and mental health issues and respecting
3 the specific rights of children in detention as specified in
4 the 3800-series regulations.

5 (3) Requiring that such training be conducted in person
6 and allow detention staff to practice techniques prior to
7 supervising children.

8 (4) Creating additional minimum qualifications for
9 management and staff, which may include raising the minimum
10 age of detention staffers.

11 (5) Restricting the use of overtime, including limiting
12 the number of hours a detention officer or supervisor can
13 work either consecutively or in a 24-hour to 48-hour period.

14 (6) Reviewing any options that may be available to
15 ensure a living wage that can attract and retain qualified
16 candidates.

17 (7) Adding programming requirements for juveniles,
18 including standards on how juveniles should be educated in
19 ways that support age-appropriate educational activities.

20 (8) Adopting policies to ensure the rights of juveniles
21 and staff to file incident reports and grievances without
22 retaliation, including a policy to internally track ChildLine
23 reports, facility-specific incident reports and grievances
24 filed against employees, whether by juveniles or other
25 employees.