

## House Resolution 563

By: Representatives Drenner of the 57<sup>th</sup>, Benfield of the 56<sup>th</sup>, Post 1, Henson of the 55<sup>th</sup>, Gardner of the 42<sup>nd</sup>, Post 3, and Dooley of the 33<sup>rd</sup>, Post 3

## A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing mental illness and suicide in youth as state public health crises and encouraging  
2 evidence based initiatives to screen children and adolescents for mental disorders in order  
3 to identify illness and prevent suicide among youth; and for other purposes.

4 WHEREAS, over the past 20 years, advances in scientific research have changed the way we  
5 think about children's mental health, and we have learned that the same mental disorders that  
6 afflict adults can also occur in children and adolescents; and

7 WHEREAS, scientific research has also demonstrated that early identification and treatment  
8 of mental disorders in youth greatly increases a child or adolescent's prognosis; and

9 WHEREAS, in January, 2001, the United States Surgeon General noted that while one in ten  
10 youth in the United States suffers from mental illness severe enough to cause some level of  
11 impairment, only one in five of such children and adolescents receives needed mental health  
12 treatment; and

13 WHEREAS, the World Health Organization has reported that neuropsychiatric disorders in  
14 youth will rise by over 50 percent by 2020, making such disorders one of the top five causes  
15 of disability, morbidity, and mortality among children and adolescents; and

16 WHEREAS, psychological autopsy studies have found that 90 percent of youth who commit  
17 suicide have depression or another diagnosable mental or substance abuse disorder at the  
18 time of death, verifying that a link between mental illness and suicide does exist; and

19 WHEREAS, in 1999, the United States Surgeon General first recognized that mental illness  
20 and substance abuse disorders are, in fact, the greatest risk factors for suicidal behavior, and  
21 properly identifying and treating mental illness and substance abuse disorders are important  
22 parts of suicide prevention activities; and

1 WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently reported that, in 2000,  
2 suicide was the third leading cause of death among youth 15 to 24 years of age; and

3 WHEREAS, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration recently  
4 reported that, in 1999, almost three million youth were at risk for suicide but only 36 percent  
5 received mental health treatment; and

6 WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also reported that each year in  
7 the United States almost as many adolescents and young adults commit suicide as they do  
8 die from all natural causes, such as leukemia, birth defects, pneumonia and influenza, and  
9 AIDS, combined; and

10 WHEREAS, in January, 2001, the United States Surgeon General issued a goal to "improve  
11 the assessment and recognition of mental health needs in children" in part by "encouraging  
12 early identification of mental health needs in existing preschool, child care, education, health,  
13 welfare, juvenile justice, and substance abuse treatment systems"; and

14 WHEREAS, several states have recognized mental illness and suicide in youth as public  
15 health crises, some prior to the United States Department of Health and Human Services'  
16 initiative, and as of today the majority of states has either developed or is in the process of  
17 developing plans to identify mental illness and prevent suicide among youth; and

18 WHEREAS, the efforts, initiatives, and activities of the federal and state governments should  
19 be used to support evidence based practices for identifying mental illness in youth and  
20 preventing suicide among this population.

21 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that  
22 it is the sense of this body that mental illness and suicide in youth are state public health  
23 crises and that the Governor, the General Assembly, the Department of Community Health,  
24 the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Education, the Department of  
25 Juvenile Justice, and all citizens should make the identification of mental disorders and the  
26 prevention of suicide among youth a public health priority.

27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that it is the sense of this body that every child should be  
28 screened once during youth for mental illness in order to identify illness and prevent suicide  
29 among youth.

1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that it is the sense of this body that such a screening and  
2 identification process should employ sound, evidence based tools.

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that it is the sense of this body that all middle school and  
4 high school age youth should have equal access to these initiatives without stigma.