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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 326 Session of  
2015

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INTRODUCED BY SCHWEYER, SCHLOSSBERG, SCHREIBER, GAINNEY, KIM,  
THOMAS, YOUNGBLOOD, GOODMAN, McNEILL, DONATUCCI, V. BROWN,  
McCARTER, MAHONEY, DeLUCA, GIBBONS AND MURT, MAY 11, 2015

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND INDUSTRY, MAY 11, 2015

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A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to  
2 conduct a study on income inequality in this Commonwealth.

3 WHEREAS, Income inequality refers to income which is  
4 distributed in an uneven manner among a population; and

5 WHEREAS, Between 2009 and 2012, adjusted for inflation,  
6 average incomes increased 3.7% in Pennsylvania; and

7 WHEREAS, In that time frame, the overall income growth was  
8 driven by an increase of 28.6% in the income of the top 1% of  
9 earners, but over that same period, the bottom 99% of earners in  
10 Pennsylvania saw their real incomes decline by 1.1%; and

11 WHEREAS, The unprecedented degree of income inequality in the  
12 current economic expansion represents a confluence of long-term  
13 and short-term forces; and

14 WHEREAS, In the short term, real wages have been falling for  
15 most of the workers in this Commonwealth due to the deepest  
16 recession since the Great Depression as well as weak job growth  
17 during the recovery of the recession; and

1       WHEREAS, In the long term, the bargaining power of workers in  
2 this Commonwealth has been substantially weakened since 1979  
3 with a decline in the percentage of workers covered by  
4 collective bargaining and a steep decline in the purchasing  
5 power of the minimum wage; and

6       WHEREAS, In the United States, economists concur that income  
7 inequality has increased significantly nationwide over the last  
8 several decades; and

9       WHEREAS, Between the end of World War II and the late 1970s,  
10 incomes in the United States were becoming more equal, with  
11 lower incomes rising faster than higher incomes; and

12       WHEREAS, After remaining relatively constant for much of the  
13 postwar era, the share of total income accrued by the wealthiest  
14 10% of households jumped from 34.6% in 1980 to 48.2% in 2008;  
15 and

16       WHEREAS, According to the United States Census Bureau, the  
17 long-term increase in income inequality is related to changes in  
18 the nation's labor market and household composition; and

19       WHEREAS, The wage distribution has become considerably more  
20 unequal, with the highly skilled, trained and educated workers  
21 at the top experiencing real wage gains and those at the bottom  
22 experiencing real wage losses; and

23       WHEREAS, Between 1980 and 2008, the share of total income  
24 accrued by the richest 1% of households rose from 10% to 21%,  
25 making the United States one of the most unequal countries in  
26 the world; and

27       WHEREAS, The evolution of income inequality in the United  
28 States is largely driven by the trends at the very top of the  
29 income distribution, as very wealthy households have continued  
30 to accrue an even greater share of the nation's total income;

1 and

2 WHEREAS, The gender wage gap and racial wage gap both  
3 contribute significantly to income inequality; and

4 WHEREAS, According to the United States Census Bureau, over  
5 the last decade, median earnings for women working full time,  
6 year-round, have been just 77% of men's earnings; and

7 WHEREAS, The gender wage gap affects all women, but for  
8 minority women, the wage shortfall is far worse; and

9 WHEREAS, Asian-American womens salaries show the smallest  
10 minority gender wage pay at 90% of white males' earnings; and

11 WHEREAS, Hispanic women's salaries show the largest minority  
12 wage gap at 54% of white males' earnings; and

13 WHEREAS, Women face a wage gap in nearly every occupation, as  
14 women are paid less than men in female-dominated occupations, in  
15 gender-balanced occupations and in male-dominated occupations;  
16 therefore be it

17 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the  
18 Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct a  
19 comprehensive study on income inequality in this Commonwealth;  
20 and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That the study include the following:

22 (1) The factors that have contributed to the significant  
23 increase in income inequality over the last several decades.

24 (2) The extent to which gender differences in education  
25 levels and occupational fields contribute to the gender wage  
26 gap.

27 (3) A comparison of the average take-home wages for  
28 working minorities and working nonminorities with the same  
29 level of education.

30 (4) A comparison of the average take-home wages for

1 minority women versus nonminority women with the same level  
2 of education.

3 (5) A comparison of wages paid for males and females in  
4 female-dominated, gender-balanced and male-dominated  
5 occupations;

6 and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
8 seek input from the Department of Labor and Industry and other  
9 Commonwealth agencies as appropriate and any other group or  
10 individual having information relevant to the study; and be it  
11 further

12 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
13 submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the  
14 Governor and the House of Representatives within six months of  
15 the adoption of this resolution.