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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, There have been recent significant advances in neuroscience with increased understanding of how emotional neglect and exposure to serious trauma affect the way children perceive and interact with their world both during childhood and into adulthood; and

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WHEREAS, Post-traumatic stress disorder and other trauma-related disorders in children and adults can be caused both by exposure to a single severe traumatic incident or by exposure to a cumulative series of serious traumatic events; and

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WHEREAS, Such traumatic incidents and events include emotional and physical abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, separation from or loss of a parent due to divorce or other reasons, serious injury or death of a parent, exposure to family discord, domestic violence, parental mental illness, substance abuse, criminal activity in the home, and other traumatic and non-nurturing experiences and environments; and

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WHEREAS, Abuse, neglect, and traumatic events compose part of what has been described in the medical literature as "adverse childhood experiences" or "ACEs", and the cumulative potential impact to a child who has a significant history of

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1 exposure to neglect and trauma can be calculated using what is
2 called an ACE score; and

3 WHEREAS, It is now understood that significant exposure to
4 severe traumatic events as outlined above can negatively affect
5 the neurobiology and anatomy of a person's developing brain and
6 result in a substantially impaired ability to absorb new
7 information, develop healthy coping skills, and adapt to life's
8 challenges as the child becomes locked into a
9 "fight-flight-or-freeze" mode that becomes the child's and
10 future adult's default approach when interacting with the world
11 around them; and

12 WHEREAS, Children and adults whose brains have been
13 negatively affected by exposure to severe or repeated serious
14 trauma, often experience persistent and sometimes overwhelming
15 dysfunctional emotions of fear, anxiety, depression,
16 hopelessness, and anger, and may exhibit socially
17 inappropriate labile and aggressive behaviors, or may exhibit
18 socially inappropriate emotional detachment and avoidance
19 behaviors; and

20 WHEREAS, These negative coping behaviors and dysfunctional
21 emotions limit a person's capacity to form healthy stable
22 relationships, foster social capital, learn from experiences
23 and mistakes, set and achieve short and long-term goals, and

1 succeed in educational and vocational pursuits; and

2 WHEREAS, In addition to the above negative outcomes,
3 children and adults are more likely to attempt to self medicate
4 trauma-related "fight-flight-or-freeze" anxiety and emotional
5 dysfunction by using available substances such as tobacco,
6 alcohol, prescription medications, and street drugs, including
7 heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine, and cannabis; and

8 WHEREAS, Because of the cumulative adverse effects of the
9 above negative outcomes on their physical health and emotional
10 and cognitive capabilities, children and adults affected by
11 severe traumatic events, despite their sincere and best efforts
12 to succeed in life, are more likely to: (1) perform poorly in
13 school and other academic pursuits; (2) struggle with work
14 performance and sustainable employment; (3) become chronically
15 unemployed as adults, resulting in financial stress, reduced
16 quality of life, and increased risk of experiencing long-term
17 disability, homelessness, and other personal and family
18 traumatic experiences; (4) become dependent on and addicted to
19 tobacco, alcohol, prescription medications, illicit drugs, and
20 other substances; (5) become directly engaged with law
21 enforcement and the criminal justice system; (6) suffer from
22 significant mental illness including depression, psychosis,
23 and severe anxiety leading to suicides and attempted suicides
24 that otherwise would not have occurred; (7) suffer from serious

1 physical health problems with poor long-term outcomes that
2 otherwise would not have occurred; (8) engage in high-risk
3 sexual behaviors as adolescents and adults, including onset of
4 sexual activity at an early age and multiple sexual partners,
5 resulting in increased risks of adolescent pregnancy and
6 paternity, other unintended pregnancies, and sexually
7 transmitted diseases; (9) experience significant problems and
8 failures in marriage and other intimate partner relationships;
9 (10) become victims or perpetrators of intimate partner
10 violence as adults; (11) struggle, despite their sincere
11 efforts, to provide a stable and nurturing environment for
12 their current and future children, resulting in increased
13 likelihood of intergenerational trauma and intergenerational
14 poverty; and (12) face a life expectancy shortened by as many
15 as 20 years when compared to average life expectancy for adults
16 who did not experience severe trauma as children; and

17 WHEREAS, With an increase in understanding about the
18 impacts of trauma has come the development of evidence-based
19 questionnaires that identify behaviors and health-related
20 disorders in children and adults that can be indicative of
21 possible trauma-related exposures; and

22 WHEREAS, Using these questionnaires can provide the
23 opportunity to identify and refer a child or adult for
24 appropriate additional evaluation and treatment; and

1 WHEREAS, The mental health profession can effectively
2 diagnose and treat trauma-related disorders following
3 evidence-based approaches that have been proven to be
4 successful; and

5 WHEREAS, One example of a well-studied, highly effective
6 and widely available therapy is trauma-focused cognitive
7 behavior therapy; and

8 WHEREAS, Early childhood offers an important window of
9 elevated opportunity to prevent, treat, and heal the impacts of
10 adverse childhood experiences and toxic stress on a child's
11 brain and body; and

12 WHEREAS, A critical factor in buffering a child from the
13 negative effects of toxic stress and adverse childhood
14 experiences is the existence of at least one stable, supportive
15 relationship between the child and a nurturing adult; and

16 WHEREAS, With the increase in scientific understanding and
17 ability to identify, prevent, and treat trauma-related
18 disorders, there is great hope for children and adults to begin
19 healing from the negative effects of adverse childhood
20 experiences, develop resiliency, and have brighter, more
21 productive futures than was previously possible; and

1 WHEREAS, In order to maximize the potential for positive
2 outcomes of evidence-based interventions in the treatment of
3 severe trauma, it is imperative that employees of the State of
4 Illinois and other people who interface directly with
5 vulnerable children and adults become informed regarding the
6 effects of trauma on the human brain and available screening
7 and assessment tools and treatment interventions that lead to
8 increased resiliency in children and adults who struggle in
9 life as the result of trauma-related disorders; therefore, be
10 it

11 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
12 HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
13 encourage all officers and employees of the Illinois State
14 Board of Education, the Illinois Department of Human Services,
15 the Administrative Office of the Courts, and the Illinois
16 Department of Corrections to become informed regarding
17 well-documented detrimental short-term and long-term impacts
18 to children and adults from serious traumatic childhood
19 experiences as outlined above and implement evidence-based
20 interventions and practices that are proven to be successful in
21 developing resiliency in children and adults currently
22 suffering from trauma-related disorders to help them recover
23 from their trauma and function at their full capacity and
24 potential in school, the workplace, and community, family, and

1 interpersonal relationships; and be it further

2 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
3 delivered to the Illinois State Board of Education, the
4 Illinois Department of Human Services, the Administrative
5 Office of the Courts, the Illinois Department of Corrections,
6 and all nonprofit agencies and other entities that contract
7 with the State of Illinois to provide services to vulnerable
8 children and adults.