



|| SENATE OF PENNSYLVANIA BILL SUMMARY

Senate Resolution 32 Printer's No. 382

Prime Sponsor: Senator Farnese
Committee: Judiciary

SYNOPSIS:

This resolution directs the Joint State Government Commission to study the use of youth courts in the education and juvenile justice systems.

SUMMARY:

This resolution makes legislative findings, including the following:

- Large numbers of Pennsylvania's youths experience early contacts with the juvenile justice system and are at greater risk for future involvement in the justice system
- Research suggests that bad choices and behavior may result from the adolescent brain not being fully matured
- Diversion programs help youths make better choices, reduce involvement with the juvenile and criminal justice systems and reduce associated costs
- Youth courts, which are student-operated disciplinary systems that use peer pressure to correct disruptive behavior, have been a successful and cost-efficient diversionary program in Pennsylvania and elsewhere for decades
- Youth courts are used in both schools and juvenile-justice facilities, and involve public speaking, creative problem-solving, literacy, and the development of citizenship and social skills

The resolution directs the Joint State Government Commission to establish an advisory committee of 21 individuals from delineated professions to conduct a thorough analysis of youth courts in the schools and juvenile justice systems. The advisory committee will identify best practices, cost savings, and other benefits of using youth courts. The final report will contain recommendations to implement necessary changes to statutes, practices, policies, and procedures.

RESOLUTION HISTORY:

None.

Prepared by: Cawley 3/24/2017