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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 584 Session of  
2017

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INTRODUCED BY HILL-EVANS, SCHWEYER, DEAN, YOUNGBLOOD, DONATUCCI,  
J. HARRIS, SIMS, KINSEY, CALTAGIRONE, PASHINSKI, WHEATLEY,  
FRANKEL, ROZZI, FREEMAN, VAZQUEZ, V. BROWN, DRISCOLL,  
McCARTER, ROEBUCK, BRADFORD, STURLA, DERMODY, FITZGERALD,  
D. MILLER, SCHLOSSBERG, THOMAS, BULLOCK, DAVIDSON, READSHAW  
AND KAVULICH, OCTOBER 30, 2017

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND INDUSTRY, OCTOBER 30, 2017

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A RESOLUTION

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

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

6 WHEREAS, Between 2009 and 2012, adjusted for inflation,  
7 average incomes increased 3.7% in this Commonwealth; and

8 WHEREAS, During that time, the overall income growth was  
9 driven by an increase of 28.6% in the income of the top 1% of  
10 earners; and

11 WHEREAS, During that same period, the bottom 99% of earners  
12 in this Commonwealth saw their real incomes decline by 1.1%; and

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

16 WHEREAS, In the short term, real wages have been falling for

1 most workers in this Commonwealth due to the deepest recession  
2 since the Great Depression as well as weak job growth during the  
3 recovery of the recession; and

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

9 WHEREAS, In the United States, economists concur that income  
10 inequality has increased significantly nationwide over the last  
11 several decades; and

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

15 WHEREAS, After remaining relatively constant for much of the  
16 postwar era, the share of total income accrued by the wealthiest  
17 10% of households jumped from 34.6% in 1980 to 48.2% in 2008;  
18 and

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

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

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

30 WHEREAS, The evolution of income inequality in the United

1 States is largely driven by the trends at the very top of the  
2 income distribution, as very wealthy households have continued  
3 to accrue an even greater share of the nation's total income;  
4 and

5 WHEREAS, The gender wage gap and racial wage gap contribute  
6 significantly to income inequality; and

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

10 WHEREAS, The gender wage gap affects all women; and

11 WHEREAS, The wage shortfall is far worse for minority women;  
12 and

13 WHEREAS, Asian-American women's salaries show the smallest  
14 minority gender wage gap at 90% of white men's earnings; and

15 WHEREAS, Hispanic women's salaries show the largest minority  
16 wage gap at 54% of white men's earnings; and

17 WHEREAS, Women face a wage gap in nearly every occupation;  
18 and

19 WHEREAS, Women are paid less than men in female-dominated  
20 occupations, gender-balanced occupations and male-dominated  
21 occupations; therefore be it

22 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the  
23 Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct a  
24 comprehensive study on income inequality in this Commonwealth;  
25 and be it further

26 RESOLVED, That the study include the following:

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

29 (2) The extent to which gender differences in education  
30 levels and occupational fields contribute to the gender wage

1 gap.

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

5 (4) A comparison of the average take-home wages for  
6 minority women versus nonminority women with the same level  
7 of education.

8 (5) A comparison of wages paid for men and women in  
9 female-dominated, gender-balanced and male-dominated  
10 occupations;

11 and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
13 seek input from the Department of Labor and Industry and other  
14 Commonwealth agencies as appropriate and any other group or  
15 individual having information relevant to the study; and be it  
16 further

17 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
18 submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the  
19 Governor and the House of Representatives within six months of  
20 the adoption of this resolution.