

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 44

Unofficial
Relating to youth violence

Whereas, youth across this state are committing acts of violence against one another and throughout their communities; and

Whereas, a national survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that United States adults reported approximately 1.56 million incidents of victimization by perpetrators estimated to be between 12 and 20 years of age; and

Whereas, the CDC states, "Violence is a serious public health problem in the United States. From infants to the elderly, it affects people in all stages of life. In 2007, more than 18,000 people were victims of homicide and more than 34,000 took their own life"; and

Whereas, the CDC reports that many people survive violence and are left with permanent physical and emotional scars and that violence erodes communities by reducing productivity, decreasing property values, and disrupting social services; and

Whereas, a national initiative led by the CDC, Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere (STRYVE), assists communities in applying a public health perspective to preventing youth violence; and

Whereas, in 1985, former United States Surgeon General C. Everett Koop declared violence as a public health issue and called for the application of the science of public health to the treatment and prevention of violence; and

Whereas, in 2000, former United States Surgeon General David Satcher declared youth violence as a public health epidemic; and

Whereas, Dr. Satcher released a report that deems youth violence as a threat to public health and calls for federal, state, local, and private entities to invest in research on youth violence and for the use of the knowledge gained to inform intervention programs; and

Whereas, the report states that the public health approach to youth violence involves identifying risk and protective factors, determining how they work, making the public aware of these findings, and designing programs to prevent or stop the violence; and

Whereas, the 2000 public health report calls for national resolve to confront the problem of youth

violence systematically; to facilitate entry of youth into effective intervention programs rather than incarceration; to improve public awareness of effective interventions; to convene youth, families, researchers, and public and private organizations for a periodic youth violence summit; to develop new collaborative multidisciplinary partnerships; and to hold periodic, highly visible national summits; and

Whereas, an individual's characteristics, experiences, and environmental conditions during childhood and adolescence are an indicator of future violent behavior; and

Whereas, ages 15 through 18, the ages that students spend in high school, are the peak years of offending; and

Whereas, there is concern about high school dropout rates, academic performance, and violence in schools across this state; and

Whereas, according to the Yale School of Medicine Child Study Center, the Comer School Development Program offers low-achieving schools assistance in creating a conducive learning environment while providing a solid foundation for students; and

Whereas, the work of the Yale School of Medicine Child Study Center has demonstrated that, "When teachers, administrators, parents, and mature adults interact with students in a supportive school environment and culture and provide adequate instruction in a way that mediates physical, social-interactive, psycho-emotional, moral-ethical, linguistic and cognitive-intellectual development, acceptable academic achievement will take place"; and

Whereas, the Comer School Development Program is an operating system comprised of three teams: the School Planning and Management Team, the Student and Staff Support Team, and the Parent Team, which work together to create a comprehensive school plan; and

Whereas, the Comer School Development Program model is guided by three principles: decision-making by consensus, no-fault problem solving, and collaboration; and

Whereas, due to the violence epidemic, youth suffer from either primary or secondary trauma. Primary trauma is trauma associated with the violent death of a loved one. Secondary trauma results from exposure to violence present within their community; and

Whereas, exposure to violence in families and communities, as well as exposure to homicidal death, can lead to youth-specific post-traumatic stress disorder with complex effects as well as homicidal grief; and

Whereas, trauma is not easily visible within youth because it requires proper assessment and, due to the amount of violence youth are currently exposed to, measures should be taken to properly assess the issue; and

Whereas, the experience of trauma impacts children of all situations and conditions across this state; and

Whereas, in August 2007, the CDC deemed schools as providing "a critical opportunity for changing societal behavior because almost the entire population is engaged in this institution for many years, starting at an early and formative period" and "Universal school-based violence prevention programs represent an important means of reducing violent and aggressive behavior in the United States":

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved by the members of the Missouri Senate, Ninety-ninth General Assembly, Second Regular Session, the House of Representatives concurring therein, hereby declare youth violence as a public health epidemic and support the establishment of statewide trauma-informed education; and

Be It Further Resolved that June seventh of each year shall be known and is designated as "Christopher Harris Day" in Missouri to remember children in St. Louis and throughout the state of Missouri lost to violence; and

Be It Further Resolved that this resolution be sent to the Governor for his approval or rejection pursuant to the Missouri Constitution.