

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 155

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 144

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 155—Relative to childhood brain development.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 2, 2014.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 155, Bocanegra. Childhood brain development: adverse experiences: toxic stress.

This measure would urge the Governor to identify evidence-based solutions to reduce children's exposure to adverse childhood experiences, address the impacts of those experiences, and invest in preventive health care and mental health and wellness interventions.

WHEREAS, Research over the last two decades in the evolving fields of neuroscience, molecular biology, public health, genomics, and epigenetics reveals that experiences in the first few years of life build changes into the biology of the human body that, in turn, influence the person's physical and mental health over his or her lifetime; and

WHEREAS, Adverse childhood experiences are traumatic experiences that occur during childhood, including physical, emotional or sexual abuse, physical and emotional neglect, household dysfunction, including substance abuse, untreated mental illness or incarceration of a household member, domestic violence, or separation or divorce involving household members, that can have a profound effect on a child's developing brain and body and can result in poor health during the person's adulthood; and

WHEREAS, The original 1998 Adverse Childhood Experiences Study, which surveyed approximately 17,000 adult Californians, found that two-thirds of participants had at least one adverse childhood experience and one in six participants had four or more adverse childhood experiences; and

WHEREAS, The Adverse Childhood Experience Study also found a strong correlation between the number of adverse childhood experiences and a person's risk for disease and negative health behaviors; and

WHEREAS, Researchers found that a person with four or more adverse childhood experiences was 2.4 times more likely to have a stroke, 2.2 times more likely to have ischemic heart disease, 2 times more likely to have chronic pulmonary obstructive disease, 1.9 times more likely to have a type of cancer, and 1.6 times more likely to have diabetes; and

WHEREAS, Researchers found that a person with four or more adverse childhood experiences was 12.2 times more likely to attempt suicide, 10.3 times more likely to use injection drugs, and 7.4 times more likely to be an alcoholic; and

WHEREAS, The life expectancy of a person with six or more adverse childhood experiences is 20 years shorter than a person with no adverse childhood experiences; and

WHEREAS, These early adverse experiences literally shape the physical architecture of a child's developing brain and establish either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all the learning, health, and behavior that follow; and

WHEREAS, Strong, frequent, or prolonged stress in childhood caused by adverse childhood experiences can become toxic stress, impacting the development of a child's fundamental brain architecture and stress response systems; and

WHEREAS, Early childhood offers a unique window of opportunity to prevent and heal the impacts of adverse childhood experiences and toxic stress on a child's brain and body; and

WHEREAS, A child's brain continues to develop through adolescence and into young adulthood; and

WHEREAS, The emerging science and research on toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences evidence a growing public health crisis for the state with implications for the state's educational, juvenile justice, criminal justice, and public health systems; and

WHEREAS, Adverse childhood experiences can significantly impact a child's success in education; and

WHEREAS, The Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) found that neurobiological, epigenetics, and psychological studies have shown that traumatic experiences in childhood and adolescence can diminish concentration, memory, and the organizational and language abilities students need to succeed in school, thereby negatively impacting a student's academic performance, classroom behavior, and the ability to form relationships; and

WHEREAS, A child with four or more adverse childhood experiences is 46 times more likely to have learning or emotional problems; and

WHEREAS, A woman with seven or more adverse childhood experiences is 5.5 times more likely to become pregnant as a teenager; and

WHEREAS, Adverse childhood experiences can affect a child's future contact with the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, A woman with three violent adverse childhood experiences is 3.5 times more likely to become the victim of intimate partner violence, while a man with three violent adverse childhood experiences is 3.8 times more likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence; and

WHEREAS, A critical factor in buffering children from the effects of toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences is the existence of supportive, stable relationships between children and their families, caregivers, and other important adults in their lives; and

WHEREAS, Positively influencing the architecture of a child's developing brain is more effective and less costly than attempting to correct poor learning, health, and behaviors later in life; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature urges the Governor to reduce children's exposure to adverse childhood experiences, address the impacts of those

experiences, and invest in preventive health care and mental health and wellness interventions; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature urges the Governor of California, in doing the foregoing, to consider the principles of brain development, the intimate connection between mental and physical health, the concepts of toxic stress, adverse childhood experiences, buffering relationships, and the roles of early intervention and investment in children as important strategies; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.