
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 113 Session of
2015

INTRODUCED BY KITCHEN, VANCE, TEPLITZ, WOZNIAK, DINNIMAN,
FONTANA, BREWSTER, COSTA, BAKER, RAFFERTY, AUMENT,
VULAKOVICH, SCAVELLO, FARNESE, SMITH, TARTAGLIONE AND
WILLIAMS, MAY 8, 2015

REFERRED TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE, MAY 8, 2015

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the Commonwealth to adopt and utilize person-first
2 language with respect to people with disabilities.

3 WHEREAS, Approximately one in every six residents of this
4 Commonwealth is a person with a disability; and

5 WHEREAS, These persons, approximately 1.8 million
6 individuals, comprise every geographic, socioeconomic, racial,
7 ethnic, age, gender and religious group; and

8 WHEREAS, These persons, approximately 700,000 children and
9 youths and 1.1 million adults, are a part of our communities,
10 schools and workplaces; and

11 WHEREAS, People with disabilities are protected by Federal
12 and State laws prohibiting discrimination and promoting
13 integration, inclusion and participation in society, including
14 in the receipt of services, education, employment,
15 transportation and housing; and

16 WHEREAS, People with disabilities continue to encounter
17 negative attitudes, barriers, segregation, discrimination and

1 isolation in society; and

2 WHEREAS, Using language that puts a disability before the
3 individual or that describes the individual by a medical
4 diagnosis devalues and disrespects the humanity of that
5 individual; and

6 WHEREAS, Inaccurate descriptions, outdated words,
7 generalizations and other negative language about people with
8 disabilities contribute to stigma, misinformation, negative
9 stereotypes and attitudinal barriers; and

10 WHEREAS, Person-first language, also known as people-first
11 language, places the individual before the disability and uses
12 neutral, objective, accurate and nonpejorative language; and

13 WHEREAS, Person-first language results in positive, realistic
14 and balanced communication about people with disabilities and
15 treats each person as an individual not defined solely by a
16 disability; and

17 WHEREAS, Language shapes the ideas, attitudes and beliefs of
18 individuals and society; and

19 WHEREAS, Language thus influences government decisions,
20 policies and laws; therefore be it

21 RESOLVED, That the Senate recognize that the use of language
22 that is not person-first language with respect to people with
23 disabilities hinders their integration, inclusion, participation
24 and respect in society and negatively influences government
25 decisions, policies and laws; and be it further

26 RESOLVED, That the Senate urge adoption and utilization by
27 the Commonwealth of person-first language with respect to people
28 with disabilities; and be it further

29 RESOLVED, That the Senate urge adoption and utilization of
30 person-first language in legislation, cosponsorship memos,

1 reports, policies and other documents of the General Assembly in
2 print or electronic format; and be it further

3 RESOLVED, That the Senate urge adoption and utilization of
4 person-first language by executive branch agencies and the
5 judiciary in regulations, policies, reports and other documents
6 in print or electronic format; and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That, for purposes of this resolution, person-first
8 language or people-first language means language that places the
9 individual before his or her disability, does not reduce the
10 individual to a series of labels, symptoms or medical terms and
11 does not use outdated, inaccurate or pejorative descriptors or
12 terms; and be it further

13 RESOLVED, That the following examples serve as models of
14 appropriate use of person-first language:

15 (1) "individual with a disability," not "disabled
16 individual";

17 (2) "individual who uses a wheelchair," not "individual
18 who is wheelchair-bound" or "confined to a wheelchair";

19 (3) "individuals who are blind," not "the blind";

20 (4) "an individual with a mental health condition," not
21 "an individual who suffers from a mental disorder";

22 (5) "individual with paraplegia," not "a paraplegic";

23 (6) "individual who is deaf or hard of hearing," not
24 "the deaf" or "the hard of hearing"; and

25 (7) "individual with an intellectual disability," not
26 "mental retardation";

27 and be it further

28 RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to
29 the Honorable Tom Wolf, Governor, and to the Honorable Thomas
30 Saylor, the Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.