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ACR-8 Adverse childhood experiences: post-traumatic “street” disorder. (2017-2018)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 8

CHAPTER 139

Relative to mental health.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 07, 2017.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 8, Jones-Sawyer. Adverse childhood experiences: post-traumatic “street” disorder.

This measure would recognize adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), also known as post-traumatic “street” disorder in communities of color, as having lasting negative outcomes to both physical and mental health with growing implications for our state.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, Children who are exposed to a range of traumatic experiences can develop a form of post-traumatic stress disorder, triggered by either experiencing or witnessing a terrifying event. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares, and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event; and

WHEREAS, Research has identified the cause of this form of post-traumatic stress disorder as adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which are childhood experiences that have a tremendous impact on future violence victimization and perpetration, and lifelong health and opportunities. ACEs are also referred to as post-traumatic “street” disorder in highly segregated and deeply impoverished communities where paralyzing violence and extreme poverty are either experienced or witnessed by residents; and

WHEREAS, ACEs studies have shown that exposure to early adversity affects the developing brains and bodies of children. It affects areas like the nucleus accumbens, the pleasure and reward center of the brain that is implicated in substance dependence. It inhibits the prefrontal cortex, which is necessary for impulse control and executive function, a critical area for learning. There are also measurable differences in the amygdala, the brain's fear response center; and

WHEREAS, There are real neurologic reasons why children who are exposed to high doses of adversity are more likely to engage in high-risk behavior. Children are especially sensitive to repeated stress activation because their brains and bodies are just developing. High doses of adversity not only affect brain structure and function, they affect the developing immune system, developing hormonal systems, and even the way our DNA is read and transcribed; and

WHEREAS, Studies show that a child's exposure to multiple or prolonged traumatic events during his or her early childhood, and occurring within the primary caregiving system, that involve the simultaneous or sequential occurrence of child maltreatment, including psychological maltreatment, neglect, physical and sexual abuse, and domestic violence, result in emotional dysregulation and the loss of safety, direction, and the ability to detect or respond to danger cues. Exposure to these traumatic events often sets off a chain of events leading to subsequent or repeated trauma exposure in adolescence and adulthood; and

WHEREAS, ACEs, including post-traumatic “street” disorder, have gone undiagnosed until recently. It disproportionately impacts minority children living in highly segregated and impoverished communities and has become an unaddressed public health threat facing our state today; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature recognizes adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), also known as post-traumatic “street” disorder in communities of color, as having lasting negative outcomes to both physical and mental health with growing implications for our state.