REQUESTING THAT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL REFER TO THE SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH AND THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGING, CHILDREN AND YOUTH, LEGISLATIVE AND MILITARY AFFAIRS A STUDY ON ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES.

WHEREAS, adverse childhood experiences are events or environmental factors that impact key areas of brain development and have a lasting effect on the health and well-being of an individual; and

WHEREAS, an estimated eighty-five percent (85%) of brain development occurs during the early years in the life of an individual, early life experiences are an important public health issue; and

WHEREAS, adverse childhood experiences include without limitation physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, witnessing domestic violence, parental divorce or separation, the incarceration of a parent or guardian, substance abuse committed by a parent or guardian, mental illness affecting a parent or guardian, and living in poverty; and

WHEREAS, adverse childhood experiences have a significant impact on lifelong health outcomes for an individual and opportunities available to an individual; and

WHEREAS, adverse childhood experiences have been linked to poor academic performance, behavioral struggles in school, risky health behaviors, substance abuse, mental illness, chronic health conditions, a poor quality of life, and early death; and

WHEREAS, the risk of negative outcomes that continue throughout the life of an individual increases with an increase in the number of adverse childhood experiences; and

WHEREAS, Arkansas has a vested interest in working to decrease the impact of adverse childhood experiences on the health and well-being of
Arkansas residents as the state ranks in the top five (5) nationally for children who have experienced three (3) or more adverse childhood experiences; and

WHEREAS, there are stakeholders, including without limitation state entities, private organizations, and nonprofit organizations, that recognize the impact of adverse childhood experiences on both young and older Arkansas residents, and considering their expertise and experience in these areas of public health, safety, and wellbeing that are of such importance in shaping public policy in our state, their existing work and the possibilities for their future collaboration should be presented to the General Assembly,

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT PROPOSED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF THE NINETY-SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

THAT the Legislative Council refer to the Senate Interim Committee on Children and Youth and the House Committee on Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs conduct a study on adverse childhood experiences with a specific focus on:

(1) Increasing awareness of adverse childhood experiences and the impact of adverse childhood experiences;
(2) Reducing the number of adverse childhood experiences;
(3) Promoting healing and wellness for the residents of this state as it relates to adverse childhood experiences; and
(4) Building the capacity of the human services and health systems in the State of Arkansas to address adverse childhood experiences.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Jamie Scott
District 37

Prepared by: JNL/JNL