WHEREAS, Wilmington is a vibrant and diverse city of proud residents, strong neighborhoods, and a thriving arts community; and

WHEREAS, as home to some of the biggest banks and best respected law firms in the world, Wilmington’s business community is the envy of cities many times its size; and

WHEREAS, in many respects, Delaware’s largest city is showing encouraging signs of growth—more people are working in Wilmington than before the recession, four new middle and high schools are opening in the city this year, and more than 500 residential units will be constructed in Wilmington over the next two years; and

WHEREAS, despite these encouraging signs, violent crime remains a pervasive problem that has the potential to destroy communities, inhibit economic growth, and stifle efforts to help Wilmington reach its potential as a world-class city; and

WHEREAS, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Wilmington ranks third in violence among 450 cities of its size, and sixth among all cities having a population of more than 50,000; and

WHEREAS, over the past decade, the City of Wilmington has averaged 118 shooting victims per year, reaching a record-high of 154 shooting victims in 2013; and

WHEREAS, in 2014 alone, there were 127 shooting victims and 23 shooting deaths in the City of Wilmington;
WHEREAS, the General Assembly strongly believes that a healthy, vibrant Wilmington is in the best interests of every Delawarean, and the well-being of our state is tied directly to the fate of our largest city; and

WHEREAS, through initiatives like the U.S. Department of Justice’s Violence Reduction Network (VRN), the federal High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program, and other initiatives, the City has taken the lead in a variety of citywide and multijurisdictional efforts to help stem the tide of violence in Wilmington; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the good-faith efforts of a variety of partners within and outside the city, Wilmington would benefit from a comprehensive strategy with respect to violent crime, and neither the city nor the state can afford to delay these efforts.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the 148th General Assembly of the State of Delaware, the Senate concurring therein, with the approval of the Governor, that:

1. The Wilmington Public Safety Strategies Commission is hereby established to conduct a rapid, intensive, and comprehensive examination of public safety strategies in the City of Wilmington. The general purposes of the Commission are:

   a. To examine which public safety strategies work and which strategies do not—not only within the City of Wilmington, but regionally and nationally as well;
   b. To better coordinate existing public safety strategies at the local, county, state, and federal levels; and
   c. To recommend effective, data-driven public safety policies that could be implemented immediately to mitigate Wilmington’s unacceptably high rate of violent crime.

2. The Commission shall be comprised of the following members:

   a. The Secretary of the Department of Safety and Homeland Security, who shall serve as co-chair;
   b. The Director of Public Safety for New Castle County, who shall serve as co-chair;
   c. A representative of the City of Wilmington, appointed by the Mayor of Wilmington;
   d. The Attorney General or a designee appointed by the Attorney General;
   e. A representative of the Governor’s Office, who shall be appointed by the Governor;
   f. Two (2) community representatives, who shall be appointed by the Governor;
   g. A representative of Wilmington’s business community, who shall be appointed by the Governor; and
   h. A retired officer of the Wilmington Police Department, who shall be appointed by the Governor.

3. Staff assistance to the Commission shall be provided by one or more outside consultants having significant expertise in the area of effective local and regional public safety strategies. Such expertise may include but not be limited to data-driven policing strategies; partnerships among local, state, and regional law enforcement agencies; community
policing; and similar policies. In connection herewith, the Secretary of the Department of Safety and Homeland Security is authorized to retain, employ, and contract for the services of such consultants, research, and technical personnel as shall be necessary to provide staff assistance to the Commission.

4. In accordance with the general purposes described in paragraph 1 above, topics to be considered by the Commission may include, but shall not be limited to:
   a. An analysis of crime data in and around the City of Wilmington;
   b. A review of the existing organizational structure and deployment strategies of the Wilmington Police Department;
   c. The development of policing districts or other geographic areas of accountability;
   d. An examination of effective public safety strategies in other jurisdictions, with an emphasis on nearby municipalities that have recently achieved success in reducing violent crime;
   e. A review of existing operational and monetary resources provided by state, county, and federal agencies, with a view toward ensuring such resources are sufficient, well-coordinated, and effective; and
   f. Obtaining input from community and business leaders regarding possible recommendations of the Commission and their potential impact.

5. The Commission shall submit a Report and Recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly as soon as possible, but in no event later than March 31, 2015. Such Report and Recommendations may include the topics described in paragraph 4 above, or on such other topics as the Commission may consider.

6. With respect to the administration of oaths and the production of witnesses and records, any proceeding of the Commission shall be considered a hearing of the General Assembly for purposes of 29 Del.C. § 705. The Commission may designate records of the Board confidential and exempt from public disclosure in accordance with Delaware’s Freedom of Information Act, 29 Del.C. §§ 10001 et seq.

SYNOPSIS

Despite the good-faith efforts of city, county, state, and federal law enforcement and other officials, Wilmington’s violent crime rate remains unacceptably high. This Joint Resolution establishes the Wilmington Public Safety Strategies Commission to conduct a rapid, intensive, and comprehensive examination of public safety strategies in the City of Wilmington.

The 9-member Commission will be co-chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Safety and Homeland Security and the New Castle County Director of Public Safety, and staff assistance will be provided by an outside consultant having significant public safety expertise. The Commission will submit a Report and Recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly as soon as possible, but in no event later than March 31, 2015.