

1 AN ACT concerning public aid.

2 WHEREAS, Millions of adults and children are disabled by
3 mental illness every year, with approximately 20% of the
4 population annually affected; and

5 WHEREAS, Nationally, suicide is the leading cause of death
6 for adolescents and young adults; and over 90% of youths
7 committing suicide have experienced a mental disorder; and

8 WHEREAS, Rural teens and rural older adults have a much
9 higher rate of suicide than do their urban peers, and many of
10 these suicides could be prevented through treatment; and

11 WHEREAS, In addition to the loss of life, mental illness
12 costs Illinois an annual economic, indirect cost which reflects
13 the loss of productivity due to illness, premature death,
14 incarcerated individuals, and those providing family care; and

15 WHEREAS, Individuals with mental illness in rural areas are
16 much less likely to have access to the mental health services
17 they need; and

18 WHEREAS, There is a specific need for more mental health
19 workers to provide aftercare support; and

20 WHEREAS, Mental illness is a devastating illness that can

1 affect any member of any family, any student in the classroom,
2 and any co-worker at a place of business; and

3 WHEREAS, All communities struggle to meet the needs of the
4 mentally ill, especially in the rural and underserved areas of
5 Illinois; and

6 WHEREAS, Key findings from the Illinois Rural Health
7 Association Mental Health Access Forum Report from 2006
8 recommend the increased use of telemedicine and technology to
9 improve access to care, increase training opportunities, and
10 evaluate quality of care; and

11 WHEREAS, There are mentally ill patients who live great
12 distances from any mental health facility and, in rural areas,
13 may have limited transportation or limited resources for
14 transportation, or both, to obtain mental health care; and

15 WHEREAS, There are mentally ill patients with special needs
16 issues including, but not limited to: deafness; limited
17 hearing; blindness; patients who speak only a language other
18 than English; physical disabilities; and developmental
19 disabilities; and

20 WHEREAS, Hospital emergency rooms have become the default
21 provider of mental health care to mentally ill patients with

1 acute crises and for whom no appropriate alternatives are
2 available, and the majority of emergency rooms are not staffed
3 with a psychiatrist; and

4 WHEREAS, Providing telepsychiatry services would provide
5 cost-efficient mental health care to those in underserved areas
6 or those who do not have access to providers with specialized
7 skills such as sign language or foreign language skills; and

8 WHEREAS, Telepsychiatry has been shown to be an effective
9 medium through which to deliver health and mental health care;
10 therefore

11 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
12 **represented in the General Assembly:**

13 Section 5. The Illinois Public Aid Code is amended by
14 adding Section 5-5.25 as follows:

15 (305 ILCS 5/5-5.25 new)

16 Sec. 5-5.25. Access to psychiatric mental health services.
17 The General Assembly finds that providing access to psychiatric
18 mental health services in a timely manner will improve the
19 quality of life for persons suffering from mental illness and
20 will contain health care costs by avoiding the need for more
21 costly inpatient hospitalization. The Department of Healthcare

1 and Family Services shall reimburse psychiatrists for mental
2 health services they provide, as authorized by Illinois law, to
3 recipients via telepsychiatry. The Department, by rule, shall
4 establish a method to reimburse providers for mental health
5 services provided by telepsychiatry. The reimbursement
6 methodology for mental health services provided by
7 telemedicine shall be comparable to the reimbursement
8 methodology used by the Department for other services provided
9 by telemedicine.

10 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon
11 becoming law.