



1 HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice
3 Statistics, reported that 1,498,000 children had a parent in
4 prison in 1999, an increase of more than 500,000 since 1991; in
5 that study, 46% of the parents reported living with their
6 children prior to incarceration; the survey estimated that
7 336,300 U.S. households with minor children are affected by the
8 imprisonment of a resident parent; and

9 WHEREAS, As the new millennium advances, the plight of
10 children impacted by parental incarceration is among the most
11 pervasive problems challenging correction policymakers and
12 child welfare advocates; research results show that when a
13 parent is incarcerated, the lives of their children are
14 disrupted by separation from parents, severance from siblings,
15 and displacement to different caregivers, a large number placed
16 in foster care; and

17 WHEREAS, About 80% of the roughly 2,800 women locked up in
18 Illinois are mothers; and

19 WHEREAS, Studies show that the more contact parents have
20 with their children, the less likely they are to reenter the
21 penal system and the less likely their children are to be
22 involved in delinquent behaviors; and

23 WHEREAS, The Illinois Department of Children and Family
24 Services is responsible for the care and maintenance of
25 hundreds of children whose parents are incarcerated in Illinois
26 Department of Corrections facilities; and

27 WHEREAS, The importance of parent/child visitation is
28 acknowledged by the Illinois Department of Children and Family
29 Services in its rules (89 Ill. Adm. Code 301.210(a)) which
30 provide: "The Department recognizes that there is a strong

1 correlation between regular parental visits and contacts with a
2 child and the child's discharge from placement services"; and

3 WHEREAS, The locations of the State's penal facilities
4 often create logistical obstacles, preventing frequent
5 in-person contacts between these children and their
6 incarcerated parents, as a result, these children are often
7 restricted to 4 visits a year, or less, although State
8 officials recognize that more frequent contacts would be in the
9 children's best interests; and

10 WHEREAS, It would be in the best interests of many children
11 of incarcerated parents to be able to visit at least monthly
12 with their parents by way of video conferencing at the offices
13 of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and the
14 child welfare agencies; and

15 WHEREAS, While video conferencing is not a substitute for
16 actual face to face visitation, when used as a tool to bridge
17 the distance and time until the next physical visit, it can be
18 extremely beneficial and will nurture parent-child
19 relationships, however, the availability of video-conferencing
20 should in no way reduce or limit the child's opportunity to
21 have in person visitation with the parent, but should
22 supplement that in person contact; and

23 WHEREAS, Through the use of high speed Internet services,
24 the costs related to video conferencing have been greatly
25 reduced; and

26 WHEREAS, The Illinois Department of Corrections and the
27 Women's Treatment Center sponsor a program called "Parent and
28 Child Together" (PACT), a small video conferencing program
29 which allows about 100 incarcerated women at the Decatur
30 Correctional Center to "visit" with their children 180 miles
31 away in a networked Chicago office; and

1 WHEREAS, The Illinois Department of Corrections has
2 concluded that this program has been a success; therefore, be
3 it

4 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
5 NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
6 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that the Illinois Department of
7 Children and Family Services and the Illinois Department of
8 Corrections shall jointly prepare a report as to the costs and
9 feasibility of providing monthly video conferencing visitation
10 to appropriate children in State care, whose parents are
11 incarcerated in facilities of the Illinois Department of
12 Corrections, where there is a judicial finding that video
13 conference visitation, as supplement to in person visitation,
14 would be in the child's best interests; and be it further

15 RESOLVED, That the Illinois Department of Children and
16 Family Services and the Illinois Department of Corrections
17 shall present the report to the General Assembly no later than
18 October 1, 2006; and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be sent to the
20 Director of Children and Family Services and the Director of
21 Corrections.