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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION

2           WHEREAS, The percentage of Illinoisans without healthcare  
3 coverage has been rising for the last 15 years, growing from  
4 9.7% in 1987 to 14.1% in 2002, and rural residents have been  
5 facing increasing barriers to health care including provider  
6 shortage, transportation, and lack of medical insurance; and

7           WHEREAS, More than 28% of the U.S. population, over 65  
8 million people, live in rural areas, yet only 9% of physicians  
9 practice in rural areas and Illinois is no exception; and

10           WHEREAS, The shortage of rural health professionals in  
11 Illinois is on the rise and is expected to increase sharply in  
12 the next 10 years due to the retirement of an aging rural  
13 health professions workforce and the absence of adequate  
14 numbers of rural-specific students in health professions  
15 trainings programs to replace them, and this may increase the  
16 disparity in access to basic medical services unless corrective  
17 action is taken; and

18           WHEREAS, 80 Illinois counties are medical shortage areas,  
19 and if trends continue without intervention, 485 additional  
20 physicians will be required by 2010 and there will be a related  
21 demand for the allied health professionals necessary to provide  
22 comprehensive health services; and

1           WHEREAS, Health manpower shortages will be magnified as the  
2 aging rural population increases the demand for health care  
3 services; and

4           WHEREAS, Illinois is facing a 2010 nursing shortage of  
5 4,265 nurses, of which nearly half will be required in rural  
6 communities to replace retirees and increased system demands  
7 for health care; and

8           WHEREAS, The average population-per dentist ratio places  
9 rural residents at nearly a 2 to 1 disadvantage for accessing  
10 dental care and in 82 of 88 rural counties there is no  
11 pediatric dentist participating in the Medicaid program and  
12 one-fifth of actively practicing rural dentists graduated from  
13 Illinois dental schools that no longer exist; and

14           WHEREAS, The number of retail pharmacies in Illinois has  
15 increased, particularly in urban areas, but its has become  
16 increasingly difficult to recruit pharmacists for rural  
17 hospital work due to staffing shortages and maldistribution;  
18 and

19           WHEREAS, Illinois' rural residents face disparities in  
20 access to specialty medical services, tele-health, medical  
21 transportation, community health care access for basic

1 services and mental health; and

2 WHEREAS, The late U.S. Senator Paul Simon was a special  
3 advocate for the citizens of Illinois and in that interest  
4 hosted a rural health care summit under the Paul Simon Public  
5 Policy Institute that generated a set of recommendations  
6 entitled "Charting a Health Care Agenda", which resulted in the  
7 creation by the 94th General Assembly of the 8-member Joint  
8 Task Force on Rural Health and Medically Underserved Areas that  
9 focused on the reduction of health care disparities in various  
10 shortage areas of Illinois; and

11 WHEREAS, The Joint Task Force on Rural Health and Medically  
12 Underserved Areas studied the health care disparities of the  
13 citizens of Illinois and proposed priority recommendations in  
14 its December 2006 report to the Governor and General Assembly  
15 to preserve capacity, improve access, and correct workforce  
16 shortages; therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL  
18 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
19 CONCURRING HEREIN, that the recommendations of the Joint Task  
20 Force on Rural Health and Medically Underserved Areas be  
21 supported and implemented without delay; and be it further

22 RESOLVED, That each house in the General Assembly create a

1 permanent standing committee charged with monitoring and  
2 advocating for the health needs of rural and medically  
3 underserved citizens of the State; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That the General Assembly should consider  
5 allocating additional funds to implement the priority  
6 recommendations of the task force as a positive investment in  
7 the health care infrastructure of Illinois because they address  
8 long-standing critical deficits that need immediate attention;  
9 and be it further

10 RESOLVED, That immediate implementation of the Task Force  
11 priority recommendations would truly honor the legacy of the  
12 late Senator Paul Simon in terms of his advocacy and concerns  
13 regarding the reduction of health disparities across the State,  
14 and that it would be a fitting memorial for the 95th General  
15 Assembly to develop and implement in Senator Paul Simon's honor  
16 the Task Force recommendations with the appropriations  
17 necessary to accomplish the same.