

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 83

Session of  
1993

INTRODUCED BY D. R. WRIGHT, DeWEESE, STABACK, PESCI, MIHALICH,  
LEDERER, TIGUE, FAIRCHILD, DEMPSEY, MUNDY, CLYMER,  
S. H. SMITH, PERZEL, FLEAGLE, E. Z. TAYLOR, GERLACH, BAKER,  
CLARK, BROWN, BATTISTO, THOMAS, TRELLO, SURRA AND HALUSKA,  
JANUARY 27, 1993

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON RULES, JANUARY 27, 1993

AN ACT

1 Relating to rural health care; providing for voice, video or  
2 data communication links; establishing eligibility criteria;  
3 providing for duties of the Bureau of Planning within the  
4 Department of Health; and making an appropriation.

5 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
6 hereby enacts as follows:

7 Section 1. Short title.

8 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Med-Link  
9 Pilot Program Act.

10 Section 2. Definitions.

11 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall  
12 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
13 context clearly indicates otherwise:

14 "Bureau." The Bureau of Planning within the Department of  
15 Health.

16 "Med-Link." A voice, video or data communication and  
17 information network between rural health care providers and

1 sources of medical expertise, support, data, information and  
2 training.

3 "Med-Link Pilot Program." A program administered by the  
4 bureau to develop voice, video or data communication and  
5 information networks; review applications; and provide technical  
6 and financial assistance to participants.

7 "Rural health care provider." Any hospital, health care  
8 professional or other licensed health care unit located in a  
9 geographic area with a population size and density determined by  
10 the bureau.

#### 11 Section 3. Med-Link Pilot Program.

12 (a) Establishment.--There is created a Med-Link Pilot  
13 Program, which shall be administered by the bureau.

14 (b) Grants.--The bureau shall provide grants from the sums  
15 appropriated to establish Med-Link systems linking rural health  
16 care providers with other sources of medical support, data,  
17 information and training.

#### 18 Section 4. Eligibility.

19 The bureau shall consider grant proposals addressing the  
20 health care information and communication needs of rural areas  
21 offered by applicants who can demonstrate innovative  
22 applications of telecommunication and information technologies  
23 linking rural health care providers with sources of medical  
24 support, data, information and training. To be considered for  
25 grants, proposals must do all of the following:

26 (1) Account for the number of hospitals and other  
27 institutions which will be linked by the Med-Link system.

28 (2) Accurately estimate the number of rural residents  
29 who will be the indirect beneficiaries of the Med-Link grant.

30 (3) Provide information on how the programs will operate

on a 24-hour basis and incorporate back-up systems.

(4) Improve rural access to a continuum of health care information and services.

(5) Result in illness prevention and improved care.

(6) Capitalize on technology and communication networks.

#### Section 5. Technical assistance.

The bureau shall provide technical expertise to health care providers interested in establishing a program. The bureau may consult with private industries, consultants, academic research institutes and other individuals or organizations involved in telecommunications and information networks.

#### Section 6. Grant amounts.

Grants shall be awarded in amounts ranging from \$15,000 to \$45,000 a year and may be awarded for a period not to exceed three years. In determining the amount of an award, the bureau shall consider the scope of the program, the number of health care providers and consumer entities involved and the likely increase in access to and availability of health care information and services to rural residents.

#### Section 7. Reports.

The grantees shall be monitored by the bureau and shall prepare reports as the bureau requires. If it is determined that a grantee is using grant funds for purposes inconsistent with this act, the bureau shall require repayment of all or part of the grant to the Commonwealth.

#### Section 8. Further duties of bureau.

To promote maximum effectiveness of any program created under this act, the bureau shall do all of the following:

(1) Arrange for the waiver of administrative impediments to the implementation of the program, so long as the waiver

1 is consistent with the health, safety and general welfare of  
2 the rural residents who are the indirect beneficiaries of the  
3 information and services.

4 (2) Consult with Federal, State and local officials to  
5 secure the coordination of related programs and obtain  
6 waivers.

7 (3) Provide the General Assembly with legislative  
8 recommendations to facilitate the provisions of this act.

9 Section 9. Appropriation.

10 The sum of \$425,000, or as much thereof as may be necessary,  
11 is hereby appropriated to the Bureau of Planning for the fiscal  
12 year July 1, 1993, to June 30, 1994, for start-up costs and  
13 expenses of the bureau.

14 Section 10. Effective date.

15 This act shall take effect in 60 days.