

Regular Session, 2006

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 89

BY REPRESENTATIVE ODINET

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the governor and the office of facility planning and control of the division of administration to work with the Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors and the LSU Health Sciences Center to develop and implement a plan to use a portion of the Medical Center of New Orleans (Big Charity Hospital) to provide medical services to the New Orleans community and region on an interim basis while efforts continue towards construction of a new facility.

WHEREAS, Big Charity has been a major institution providing medical services in the city of New Orleans from the time it was founded in 1736, when Jean Louis, a French seaman and merchant, died, leaving his estate to build and maintain a hospital for the poor people of New Orleans, until the impacts of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita forced it to close its doors; and

WHEREAS, prior to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Big Charity had nearly four thousand employees, nearly seven hundred licensed beds, annual admissions of approximately twenty-six thousand, annual outpatient visits in excess of three hundred thousand, emergency room visits in excess of one hundred thirty-five thousand, revenues of over \$431 million, and an economic impact on the New Orleans area of \$939 million; and

WHEREAS, in addition to a facility that provided health care services to the Greater New Orleans population, Big Charity also served as the major teaching hospital for both the LSU medical school and the Tulane medical school, providing educational experience and opportunities for doctors who would practice medicine all over the state of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, since the storms there has been much debate of what to do with Big Charity, with LSU declaring that the facility needs to be torn down, the Federal Emergency

Management Agency determining that repairs could be made to the facility, the governor stating that she would like to use federal recovery funds to rebuild the hospital, and the General Accounting Office issuing a statement that should LSU decide to proceed with repairs, subsequent federal reimbursement is likely to increase; and

WHEREAS, the LSU Health Sciences Center and the LSU Board of Supervisors have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Veterans Affairs to join in developing a new coordinated medical facility in downtown New Orleans that would serve the needs of not only the poor population of New Orleans but the needs of our veterans and the population at large in the Greater New Orleans area; and

WHEREAS, that plan could take several years to finally produce a functioning multipurpose hospital offering trauma capability along with psychiatric and emergency services, while the greatest and most immediate needs in the New Orleans area at the present time are trauma, psychiatric, emergency services, and primary care through clinics and subspecialty clinics, all of which can be provided through repaired facilities at Big Charity; and

WHEREAS, although the Department of Veterans Affairs has taken large steps to ensure funding for its portion of the cost of building a new facility, the state of Louisiana needs to secure its portion of the funding, whether that be through direct state appropriations, use of FEMA payments for damages even though that will not be enough to fully fund new construction, or redevelopment of the revenue stream that existed prior to the storms, which came from patients making use of the medical services offered by the medical center; and

WHEREAS, the people trying to return to their homes in New Orleans and the people who are in New Orleans living and working as a part of the recovery effort all need immediate access to medical services, services which at the present time are completely inadequate to serve the needs of the population.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Louisiana Legislature does hereby urge and request the governor and the office of facility planning and control of the division of administration to work with the Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors and the LSU Health Sciences Center to develop and implement a plan to use a portion of the Medical Center of New Orleans (Big Charity Hospital) to provide medical services to the New

Orleans community and region on an interim basis while efforts continue towards construction of a new facility.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that an independent group shall be assembled to assess the condition of the facility and evaluate its potential uses as a location from which medical services may be offered to the population of the Greater New Orleans area, with such group being assembled by the Foundation for Historical Louisiana through its national resources and contacts with architects and those professionals who evaluate historical structures to determine their viability.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the independent evaluation team is hereby requested to assess the first three floors of the structure, excluding the basement, to determine their viability for interim use to provide medical services including emergency services, psychiatric services, and establishment of clinics and subspecialty clinics.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the independent evaluation team is hereby requested to evaluate the operating room and intensive care units to determine the feasibility of restoring the trauma unit to pre-Hurricane Katrina status, thereby making trauma services available to the citizens while a new trauma unit is being designed, funded, and built, thereby reestablishing a revenue stream that will be essential to the viability of a new facility.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the independent evaluation team is hereby requested to examine and evaluate the entire Big Charity structure to determine the advisability of repairing or restructuring the entire facility, with the possible outcome being that greater information about the extent of the damage to the building may reveal more damage which qualifies for funding under FEMA guidelines, thereby increasing the funding available for repairs and for construction of a new facility.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Foundation for Historical Louisiana shall work with the office of facility planning and control in the state division of administration, the Louisiana Recovery Authority, and the LSU Board of Supervisors in this evaluation and shall report findings to each of those entities and to the legislature upon completion of the evaluation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution shall be transmitted to the governor, the office of facility planning and control of the division of administration,

the Foundation for Historical Louisiana, the Louisiana Recovery Authority, and the LSU Board of Supervisors.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE