

RESOLUTION

NO. R-09-376

CITY HALL: July 23, 2009

BY: COUNCILMEMBERS FIELKOW AND CLARKSON

WHEREAS, in 2007, New Orleans was declared a federally designated health care area of the most severe designation, and reports on the current state of mental health in New Orleans indicate a suicide rate that is at least two to three times what it was before Hurricane Katrina; and

WHEREAS, despite the State Legislature's finding money in the budget to maintain funding for New Orleans Adolescent Hospital (NOAH), Governor Bobby Jindal recently used a line-item veto to deny \$14.2 million for NOAH, causing the closing of NOAH and leaving no mental health beds for the uninsured in Orleans Parish; and

WHEREAS, it is widely acknowledged that successful mental health crisis care includes a continuum of care from inpatient beds, including evaluations and treatments offered and adjusted under watchful professional guidance, daily group and family support, outpatient care, and ongoing professional availability; and

WHEREAS, NOAH is the only institution in New Orleans that provides all of these services to the uninsured, thus NOAH's closing interrupts the continuum of care for the most severely impacted community in Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, NOAH's closing will result in crisis patients in New Orleans being brought to emergency rooms, where they are isolated and likely will not receive the specialized care they require as they wait for inpatient beds for up to 3 to 5 days; and

WHEREAS, NOAH's closing will result in crisis patients in New Orleans being brought to Orleans Parish Prison, currently the facility with the largest number of public inpatient mental health beds in New Orleans; and

WHEREAS, the relocation of NOAH patients to Southeast Hospital in Mandeville disproportionately impacts low and moderate income New Orleans families who routinely use public transportation, which is not available between New Orleans and Mandeville, to attend to their health care needs; and

WHEREAS, public forums, two hosted by the City Council of New Orleans, have exposed the inherent injustice of moving inpatient services away from the family support and familiar cultural setting that result in the most effective form of treatment; and

WHEREAS, outpatient facilities promised by the State as replacements for NOAH have not yet assumed the patient load; and

WHEREAS, legal action is currently underway to stop the State's dismantling of the hospital that has served mental health crisis care needs in New Orleans for over 35 years; **NOW THEREFORE**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS that the Council requests City Attorney Penya Moses-Fields to consider filing amicus curiae briefs for any and all litigation involving the closing of New Orleans Adolescent Hospital.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of Council forward a certified copy of this resolution to the City Attorney's office and to Dr. Kevin Stephens, Health Director for the City of New Orleans.

THE FOREGOING RESOLUTION WAS READ IN FULL, THE ROLL WAS CALLED ON THE ADOPTION THEREOF AND RESULTED AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS:

NAYS:

ABSENT:

AND THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.