

2016 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 112

BY REPRESENTATIVES CARPENTER, BAGNERIS, BERTHELOT, BOUIE, GARY CARTER, ROBBY CARTER, COX, FRANKLIN, HALL, HUNTER, JEFFERSON, JONES, LYONS, MARCELLE, MCFARLAND, MORENO, NORTON, PIERRE, PYLANT, REYNOLDS, SMITH, THIBAUT, AND WILLMOTT

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Capital Area Human Services District to conduct a study of systems for providing appropriate mental health and behavioral health treatment in the capital region as an alternative to hospitalization or detention in jails or other correctional facilities of persons in mental health or behavioral health crisis, and to report findings of the study to the Capital Region Legislative Delegation and the legislative committees on health and welfare.

WHEREAS, access to health care, including mental health and behavioral health services, is a major public health concern throughout Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, this public health concern is very prominent in the capital region, as the Earl K. Long Medical Center, which was the state-owned public hospital in Baton Rouge, closed in 2013, and the city's only remaining centrally located hospital closed its emergency department in 2015 due to its inability to cover the cost of treating the overwhelming number of uninsured patients that it began to see in the aftermath of the closure of Earl K. Long; and

WHEREAS, as evidenced by the final passage of House Bill No. 1493 of the 2010 Regular Session and final adoption and concurrence of House Concurrent Resolution No. 129 and Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 21 of the 2015 Regular Session, the legislature has expressed serious concern regarding the issue of access to health care in the capital region; and

WHEREAS, this region was adversely affected by the 2013 closure of Baton Rouge's mental health emergency room extension, referred to hereafter as the MHERE, which had operated as part of the Earl K. Long Medical Center and kept patients with mental illness from congesting hospital emergency departments and jails; and

WHEREAS, the MHERE was a type of crisis receiving center in which a staff of mental health and behavioral health specialists provided a high level of screening and assessment to people experiencing mental health or behavioral health crises; and

WHEREAS, the MHERE functioned to connect patients experiencing mental health or behavioral health crises to either acute or ongoing community-based treatment; diminished the need in the city and region for recurrent crisis services for persons suffering from mental illness, substance abuse, or both conditions; and served as a crisis continuum component that assisted law enforcement officers, hospital emergency departments, and jails by treating persons with mental health and behavioral health conditions in an appropriate setting; and

WHEREAS, since the closure of the Baton Rouge MHERE, public officials, community leaders, and public health advocates throughout the capital region have increasingly expressed concerns over the inadequacy of resources available for treatment of persons with mental health and behavioral health conditions, with these concerns relating equally to the well-being of persons whose critical health needs are going unmet and to the mounting financial burdens that hospitals and detention facilities have incurred through confining these persons in such costly settings.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Capital Area Human Services District to conduct a study of systems for providing appropriate mental health and behavioral health treatment in the capital region as an alternative to hospitalization or detention in jails or other correctional facilities of persons in mental health or behavioral health crisis.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study and its resulting report shall address, without limitation, the following:

(1) Whether creation and maintenance of a system for providing appropriate mental health and behavioral health treatment in the capital region could be accomplished within the limits of the existing financial resources and healthcare infrastructure of the region.

(2) The cost of creating and implementing a system for providing appropriate mental health and behavioral health treatment in the capital region if such a system cannot be created and maintained within the limits of the existing financial resources and healthcare infrastructure of the region.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in developing the study, the district may engage and obtain information and commentary from public officials, community leaders, public health advocates, and stakeholder groups at the discretion of the executive director of the district.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the district shall submit a written report of findings of the study required by this Resolution to the members of the Capital Region Legislative Delegation, the House Committee on Health and Welfare, and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare no later than sixty days prior to the convening of the 2017 Regular Session of the Legislature of Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the executive director of the Capital Area Human Services District.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE