2022 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 62

BY REPRESENTATIVE ECHOLS

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health to develop a proposal for a statewide hospital coordination plan and patient transfer strategy for use in disasters and other emergency situations and to report the proposal to the House Committee on Health and Welfare and the House Select Committee on Homeland Security.

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2020, the date on which global health authorities recognized the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 as a pandemic, the governor of this state, through Proclamation No. 25 JBE 2020, declared a state of public health emergency in accordance with the Louisiana Health Emergency Powers Act, R.S. 29:760 et seq.; and

WHEREAS, this state of public health emergency in response to COVID-19 was routinely renewed and would run continuously for over two years, finally expiring on March 16, 2022; and

WHEREAS, throughout these two years, gubernatorial proclamations declaring and renewing Louisiana's COVID-19 public health emergency set forth a wide variety of protocols and mandates for the public and private sectors alike which were designed to respond to and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in this state; however, no such proclamation encompassed a statewide hospital coordination plan or patient transfer strategy; and

WHEREAS, other states have recognized the critical necessity of having a statewide hospital coordination plan in place; and

WHEREAS, a notable example of such a plan is Colorado's, which that state implemented pursuant to Executive Order No. D 2021 135; and

WHEREAS, administrators of rural hospitals in certain regions of Louisiana have reported that during the state's first surge of COVID infections in 2020, they were instructed by health officials to prepare to accept large numbers of COVID patients from other regions;

that they emptied their beds in order to do so; and that no COVID patients were ever transferred to them; and

WHEREAS, many of these same rural hospitals have reported that similar events transpired during the state's preparation for and response to the hurricanes that impacted our state in 2020 and 2021, as the hospitals were again instructed by health officials to make bed capacity available for transferred patients, did so, and received no transferred patients; and

WHEREAS, hospitals are an indispensable part of our state's emergency response infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, because the Louisiana Department of Health is the lead agency for our state's public health and medical services emergency support function during disaster and emergency periods (known commonly and classified by the state emergency operations plan as ESF-8), it is appropriate to call upon this agency to lead the development of a statewide hospital coordination plan and patient transfer strategy.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health to develop a proposal for a statewide hospital coordination plan and patient transfer strategy for use in disasters and other emergency situations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in developing the proposal called for in this Resolution, the Louisiana Department of Health shall engage, collaborate with, and obtain information and guidance from the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness and the Louisiana Emergency Response Network.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Louisiana Department of Health shall submit the proposal called for in this Resolution to the House Committee on Health and Welfare, the House Select Committee on Homeland Security, and the David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library on or before December 1, 2022.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health, the director of the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, and the executive director of the Louisiana Emergency Response Network.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES