**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO EXTEND TO THE SHRINERS HOSPITALS FOR CHILDREN THE SUPPORT OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN DEALING WITH A BUDGET SHORTFALL WHICH THREATENS TO CLOSE SIX SHRINERS HOSPITALS FOR CHILDREN THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, ONE OF WHICH IS THE SHRINERS HOSPITAL FOR CHILDREN IN GREENVILLE, AND TO ENCOURAGE THE SHRINERS HOSPITAL SYSTEM TO EXPLORE EVERY AVAILABLE OPTION FOR MAKING THE SYSTEM FINANCIALLY SOUND AND FOR KEEPING THE GREENVILLE HOSPITAL OPEN WHICH SERVES THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN A SIX-STATE AREA.

Whereas, Shriners Hospital for Children in Greenville is one of six Shriners hospitals that could be shuttered around the country as the organization copes with mounting budget problems; and

Whereas, the Shriners Hospitals for Children use income from an endowment to fund the hospitals, which provides special orthopedic and burn care to children at no charge regardless of ability to pay. However, that endowment has declined from eight billion dollars to five billion dollars, leaving the organization with an annual operating deficit; and

Whereas, as a result, the Shiners Hospital System is considering three or four options to deal with this problem, one of which is to close six hospitals or cut their budgets by twenty-five percent which would mean reduced services. Another option would be to form alliances with other hospitals in the areas concerned which, in Greenville’s case, would be the Greenville Hospital System; and

Whereas, the Greenville Shriners Hospital has been a part of the community for more than eighty years, treated about fifteen thousand patients last year, and employs about two hundred fifty people. It treats children with cerebral palsy, club foot, spinal abnormalities, and other orthopedic conditions. Beyond caring for children, it sponsors a variety of community events, such as last year’s baseball game between patients and two local Little League teams and an upcoming medical conference on cerebral palsy in June; and

Whereas, the Greeenville hospital is seeing more patients every year, always operates under its eighteen million dollar budget, and

serves a six-state area from Alabama to Virginia, and the only other two Shriners hospitals in the southeast are in Florida and Kentucky; and

Whereas, the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, pledges its support to the Shriners organization as it determines how to grow its endowment and cut operating expenses, and notes with pride that the employees of the Greenville Hospital have already volunteered to cut their hours or to take furloughs to keep the hospital open; and

Whereas, the South Carolina House of Representatives further extends its support to the Shriners organization when it decides what to do about this important and difficult problem at its annual meeting in July and expresses its hope that for the reasons identified in this resolution, the Shriners Hospital for Children in Greenville can remain open to serve the children and citizens not only from South Carolina but a six-state area. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives extend to the Shriners Hospitals for Children its support in dealing with a budget shortfall which threatens to close six Shriners Hospitals for Children throughout the country, one of which is the Shriners Hospitals for Children in Greenville and encourage the Shriners Hospital system to explore every available option for making the system financially sound and for keeping the Greenville hospital open which serves the needs of children and families in a six-state area.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Mr. Ralph Semb, Chief Executive Officer, Shriners Hospitals for Children, 2900 Rocky Point Drive, Tampa, Florida 33607.

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