

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 132

BY SENATOR DORSEY

A RESOLUTION

To commend and congratulate Dr. Jonathan Roberts for his many contributions to public healthcare in Louisiana and for his authorship of *A History of the Charity Hospitals of Louisiana: A Study of Poverty, Politics, Public Health, and the Public Interest*.

WHEREAS, Dr. Jonathan Roberts, along with Thomas Durant, has coauthored *A History of the Charity Hospitals of Louisiana: A Study of Poverty, Politics, Public Health, and the Public Interest*, a book about the Charity Hospital System of Louisiana which has provided healthcare for the poor and vulnerable populations and trained physicians and other healthcare professionals for more than two and a half centuries, beginning in New Orleans, and which describes the founding and growth of the system of ten public hospitals in Louisiana and examines the role of race, class and gender in the system's development; and

WHEREAS, the book is the result of five years of research and traces the system's origins to the founding of its first hospital in New Orleans in 1735, beginning what remains to be the oldest continuously operating hospital system in the nation; and

WHEREAS, the book offers insight to the meaning of the name Charity Hospital, which did not indicate free care, but was derived from the order of Catholic nuns, the Daughters of Charity, who began working at the New Orleans hospital soon after its founding and were instrumental in its development for generations; and

WHEREAS, countless interviews were conducted for the book, including former Governor Edwin Edwards and the late BB "60" Rayburn, former state representative and senator; and

WHEREAS, the book discusses the influence of race, class, and gender on the development of the hospital system, including the history of desegregation in the hospital system, and the fact that African American doctors couldn't treat patients in Charity Hospital until 1965; and

WHEREAS, women were also critical in the hospital system's development, including the work of the Daughters of Charity, the introduction of female physicians, and the start of nursing education; and

WHEREAS, the only history to date of the state public hospital system, the book is a comprehensive study of how poverty, politics, public health, public interest, race, gender and class contributed to the history of one of the largest, and most storied, public healthcare systems in the nation and is a must read for anyone involved with studies in healthcare management, public policy, nursing, sociology, Louisiana History, or African American studies; and

WHEREAS, the authors of the book have done a great service to Louisiana by recounting the history of the charity hospitals of Louisiana, including its efforts to provide medical care to the poor and training to medical professions, as prior to this book, a comprehensive history of all of the charity hospitals of Louisiana had not been written, and in general, this book fills an important void in the history of Louisiana's unique public hospital system by recounting the development of charity hospitals during different historical stages that span a period of more than 260 years; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Jonathan Roberts is a striking example of the power of perseverance and vision as he overcame many obstacles to become a leader in both his community as well as in the medical profession; and

WHEREAS, having grown up in the segregated South, Dr. Roberts attributes much of his success to a sheer determination and a strong educational foundation, including the completion of a Baccalaureate of Science from Southern University and both a Master and Doctorate of Public Health from Tulane University, and upon receiving his doctorate, Dr. Roberts became the first African American to earn the doctoral degree through the School of Public Health; and

WHEREAS, he has served as Chief Academic Officer at LSU Health Sciences Center and CEO of Earl K. Long Memorial Hospital, New Orleans Charity Hospital, and University Hospital; was assistant secretary of the Department of Health and Hospitals and director of the Charity Hospital System from 1980 to 1984; and has been an Associate Professor and Director of the Wellness Program with the Southern University System; and

WHEREAS, he has also served as Director of Human Resources at Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center and his rich experiences and accomplishments prepared him to become the Deputy Director of the National Hansen's Center located in Carville, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, while sustaining a thriving career, Dr. Roberts also maintained a firm commitment to his community, where he served as chief consultant to the Baton Rouge Chapter of The Links, Incorporated and aided the organization in fashioning an award-winning study of the health and social services systems in Louisiana.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend and congratulate Dr. Jonathan Roberts for his many contributions to public health care in Louisiana and for his authorship of *A History of the Charity Hospitals of Louisiana: A Study of Poverty, Politics, Public Health, and the Public Interest*.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Dr. Jonathan Roberts.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE