

RESOLUTION

SUPPORTING CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW STATE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL IN TUSCOLA COUNTY TO REPLACE THE CURRENT CARO CENTER FACILITY

WHEREAS, During the 1990s, two thirds of the state-operated psychiatric hospitals serving Michigan citizens closed. Also of concern, is that from 2005 to 2010 the number of state psychiatric beds in Michigan decreased by nearly 50%; and

WHEREAS, in the absence of needed inpatient treatment and care, individuals in acute or chronic disabling psychiatric crisis increasingly are found in hospital emergency rooms and jails/prisons. These systems experience significant negative impacts as a result. Hospital emergency rooms are so overcrowded that some acutely ill patients wait days or even weeks for a psychiatric bed to open so they can be admitted; some eventually are released to the streets without treatment; and

WHEREAS, law enforcement agencies find service calls, transportation and hospital security for people in acute psychiatric crisis creating significant, growing demands on their officers straining public safety resources. More pressure is put on police officers with some jails/prisons containing a third or more of inmates with untreated mental illness; and

WHEREAS, the number of persons with mental illness who are homeless has increased. In some communities, officials have reported as many as two-thirds of their homeless population is mentally ill; and

WHEREAS, multiple studies and the facts identified above conclude there is a pressing need for long-term, inpatient psychiatric care in Michigan; and

WHEREAS, The Legislature responded to this crisis by providing \$115 million in state building authority financed construction for a new state psychiatric hospital, and decided that the facility would be built on the grounds of the current Caro Center in the FY 16-17 and 17-18 budget. Then-Governor Snyder concurred, by signing Public Act 107 of 2017, in July of that year; and

WHEREAS, On December 19, 2017, the State Administrative Board approved a \$5.4 million contract with Integrated Design Solutions, to design a new 200 bed, regional state psychiatric hospital (an increase from the current 150 beds at the Caro Center), on the site of the existing Caro Center, with an announcement by then State DHHS Director Nick Lyon "The State of Michigan made a commitment to the Caro community that the new psychiatric hospital would remain in the community, and we are keeping that promise;" and

WHEREAS, On October 19, 2018, then-Governor Snyder participated in a ground breaking for the new 225,000 square-foot state psychiatric hospital at the site of the current Caro Center. The new hospital was scheduled to be completed in 2021 and would replace the aging Caro facility. Over \$3 million in taxpayer funds have already been spent in preparation for construction at the Caro site; and

WHEREAS, On March 13, 2019, Governor Whitmer halted construction, and contracted with a private consulting firm, at the cost of \$277,000, to re-assess the location of a new state psychiatric facility, potentially delaying the availability of new psychiatric beds and the replacement of the aging Caro facility by another 2-4 years; and

WHEREAS, the facility is a vital economic engine for this entire region of Michigan. A recent economic impact study determined that the operation infuses \$54 million annually into the regional economy while directly employing 350 people and indirectly employing another 400 people, making it the second largest employer in Tuscola County; and

WHEREAS, relocation of the facility would have dramatic, devastating negative repercussions to businesses, schools and families living in communities throughout this region of the state. The area economy is already struggling from the previous closure of State Prisons; and

WHEREAS, in addition to its critical regional economic importance, by objective measures as previously documented in choosing this location, building the new facility on the site of the current Caro Center is best for the individuals needing inpatient psychiatric care and for the taxpayers of Michigan; and

WHEREAS, at the current location there is a 100-year community tradition of caring. Seventy percent of employees travel less than 30 miles to work. The site is centrally located for family visits and patient transportation with 80% of patients coming from Genesee, Oakland and Macomb Counties, just to the south of Tuscola County. The 600 acre site is already state-owned and infrastructure is already in place. County engineers determined the on-site water system can be economically upgraded to serve the new hospital. It is accessible to state highways and near area medical providers; and

WHEREAS, the difficulty in recruiting psychiatrists is not unique to Tuscola County and will be an issue that has to be dealt with no matter where a new facility is located.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Cass City Chamber of Commerce does hereby urge Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Department of Health and Human Services Director Robert Gordon, and members of the State Legislature, in response to a critical shortage of inpatient state psychiatric beds, continue with the construction of a new 200-bed, state psychiatric hospital on the grounds of the current Caro Center, in Tuscola County, as the best option for quality, accessible services to patients and their families, and as the best value to the taxpayers of Michigan and prevent devastating negative repercussions to businesses, schools and families living in communities throughout this region of the state; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be transmitted to Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Department of Health and Human Services Director Robert Gordon, State Senator Kevin Daley, and State Representative Phil Green.