

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 51

BY SENATOR DUPLESSIS

A RESOLUTION

To commend Odyssey House Louisiana on fifty years of service in treating individuals with chronic addictions.

WHEREAS, Odyssey House Louisiana (OHL) was established on February 20, 1973, in New Orleans by a small group of committed individuals, including its founder and first executive director, Alice "Maggie" Pike; and

WHEREAS, OHL traces its roots to the original Odyssey House therapeutic community founded in New York City by Dr. Judianne Densen Gerber in 1967, which pioneered a nontraditional, family-centered approach for the treatment of substance use and mental health disorders; and

WHEREAS, OHL is headquartered in its original home in the Tremé/Lafitte neighborhood in a historic facility that has been used to serve the community for over 150 years; the home was erected in 1866 at the request of Thomy Lafon for the Sisters of the Holy Family to establish an orphanage for children displaced by the Civil War; upon Lafon's death in 1893, his bequests funded an expansion to the facility and its services; and with the relocation of the Sisters of the Holy Family in 1973 and the support of community donations, the building was purchased for the creation of Odyssey House Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, OHL has grown since its inception from a small residential treatment program to a robust network of services across New Orleans and throughout south Louisiana, including programs in Lake Charles and Morgan City; and

WHEREAS, OHL is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization and primarily serves individuals who cannot pay for their own treatment, and serves people from all parts of the state; its commitment to those most vulnerable and at risk has remained constant since its founding; and

WHEREAS, OHL's vast continuum of services includes medically monitored detox, short-term and long-term residential treatment, treatment for pregnant women and women with dependent children, and sober living, in combination with case management, housing, mental health, and primary care; and

WHEREAS, OHL's dynamic model of integrating primary and behavioral health care with an emphasis on addiction through its federally qualified health centers has been recognized and replicated across the country; and

WHEREAS, the efforts of OHL's Prevention Department with additional assistance through related grant funding have saved thousands of lives through naloxone distribution and training, infectious disease testing, and fentanyl test strip distribution, as well as development of radio, podcast, and social media content addressing substance use-specific issues related to youth; and

WHEREAS, OHL opened the state's first Sobering Center in 2019 in partnership with the city of New Orleans, which provides a safe place for individuals to sober up, deferring them from jail or the emergency room and ensuring convenient access to further treatment, thereby reducing burden on hospitals and the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, OHL helped to rebuild health service delivery systems in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina and remained operational throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that individuals seeking treatment could have access to services; OHL continues to expand its capacity to meet the growing community need for treatment.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend Odyssey House Louisiana, its staff, board, leadership, and supporters on fifty years of service to the state of Louisiana in treating individuals with chronic addictions.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Odyssey House Louisiana.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE