

No. R-233. Joint resolution in support of the continued operation of the Shriners Hospital for Children in Springfield, Massachusetts.

(J.R.H.30)

Offered by: Representatives Weston of Burlington, Ainsworth of Royalton, Andrews of Rutland City, Baker of West Rutland, Bohi of Hartford, Botzow of Pownal, Branagan of Georgia, Bray of New Haven, Burke of Brattleboro, Canfield of Fair Haven, Copeland-Hanzas of Bradford, Crawford of Burke, Davis of Washington, Devereux of Mount Holly, Donovan of Burlington, Edwards of Brattleboro, Emmons of Springfield, Fagan of Rutland City, Fisher of Lincoln, French of Shrewsbury, French of Randolph, Gilbert of Fairfax, Greshin of Warren, Haas of Rochester, Higley of Lowell, Howard of Rutland City, Hube of Londonderry, Keenan of St. Albans City, Klein of East Montpelier, Krawczyk of Bennington, Leriche of Hardwick, Lewis of Derby, Manwaring of Wilmington, Martin of Springfield, Milkey of Brattleboro, Miller of Shaftsbury, Mitchell of Barnard, Mook of Bennington, Moran of Wardsboro, Morley of Barton, Obuchowski of Rockingham, O'Donnell of Vernon, Orr of Charlotte, Partridge of Windham, Perley of Enosburg, Poirier of Barre City, Pugh of South Burlington, Ram of Burlington, Reis of St. Johnsbury, Savage of Swanton, Shand of Weathersfield, Sharpe of Bristol, Stevens of Shoreham, Sweaney of Windsor, Taylor of Barre City, Till of Jericho, Turner of Milton, Webb of Shelburne, Wright of Burlington and Young of St. Albans City

Whereas, the Shriners Hospitals for Children consist of a network of 22 specialized medical centers that offer orthopedic pediatric care, including inpatient, outpatient, and surgical services, and physical therapy and prosthetics as a child grows, and

Whereas, since 1922, Shriners Hospitals have been providing these medical and rehabilitative services to children, from birth until age 18, who have congenital deformities, problems resulting from orthopedic injuries, and diseases of the musculoskeletal system, and

Whereas, these hospitals are intended for all children, regardless of their families' financial status and health insurance coverage, and

Whereas, the Shriners Hospital serving all New England is located in Springfield, Massachusetts and, in 2008, it treated 97 Vermont patients whose registered visits to the hospital totaled 298, and

Whereas, the Springfield Shriners Hospital's staff and consultants consist of board-certified pediatric orthopedic surgeons, a pediatric rheumatologist, plastic surgeons, more than 90 consulting physicians and surgeons, rehabilitation specialists, child life specialists, and certified orthotists and prosthetists, and

Whereas, financial support for Shriners Hospitals is derived from the Shriners' organization and public donations, and

Whereas, as a network, the 22 hospitals have been losing one million dollars a day since 2001, and their financial health is now so precarious that in late March, Ralph Semb, the chair of the Shriners Hospitals' board of directors, announced that unfortunately six of the hospitals may close or reduce their services, including the Springfield, Massachusetts facility, and

Whereas, the closure of the Springfield hospital would force the Vermont patients to travel to Philadelphia for equivalent medical assistance, and outpatient services would become impractical, and

Whereas, the board is scheduled to meet in July to determine if this drastic course of action must proceed forward, and

Whereas, a rally was recently held in Springfield to support the hospital, the closure of which would not only mean the loss of specialized pediatric health care and surgical services, but the elimination of several hundred jobs, and

Whereas, the continuation of the Springfield, Massachusetts Shriners Hospital is vitally important for Vermont's children with orthopedic-related medical requirements, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly expresses its strong support for the outstanding work of the Shriners Hospital in Springfield, Massachusetts and recognizes its important and continuing role as a health care provider for the citizens of Vermont, and be it further

Resolved: That the General Assembly urges the board of directors of the Shriners Hospitals to seek every possible alternative to the closure or significant reduction of medical and surgical services at its facility in Springfield, Massachusetts, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Shriners Hospital in Springfield, Massachusetts and to Ralph Semb, chair of the Shriners Hospitals' board of directors.