

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 190

BY SENATORS PEACOCK AND TARVER

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Board of Regents to study how the state can optimally meet the oral health needs of our citizens through the establishment of a school of dentistry in northern Louisiana.

WHEREAS, Article VIII, Section 5(D)(2) of the Constitution of Louisiana provides, relative to public institutions of postsecondary education, that it is a power, duty, and responsibility of the Board of Regents to approve a proposed degree program, department of instruction, division, or similar subdivision; and

WHEREAS, Article VIII, Section 5(D)(3)(a) of the Constitution further provides that it is a power, duty, and responsibility of the board to study the need for and feasibility of creating a new institution of postsecondary education, which includes establishing a branch of such an institution; and

WHEREAS, there is great interest in establishing a dental school in northern Louisiana in order to meet the educational needs of students, the economic and workforce development needs of the region, and the healthcare needs of the area's citizens; and

WHEREAS, oral health is an important component of overall health for the citizens of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana lags behind the rest of the country in key indicators in oral health; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, Louisiana had only forty-eight dentists per one hundred thousand population, which is well below the national average of sixty-one dentists per one hundred thousand population; and

WHEREAS, the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has designated fifty-nine of our sixty-four parishes, and all of the parishes in northern Louisiana, as health professions shortage areas for dental health; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana citizens in rural areas or who have low income have been shown to have even more significant challenges in accessing dental care; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, the Louisiana Bureau of Primary Care and Rural Health received a HRSA grant to support the Louisiana Oral Health Workforce Expansion Program which set a goal to establish a rural track dental scholars program; and

WHEREAS, the northern region of the state lacks a dental school; and

WHEREAS, a dental school in north Louisiana would greatly expand access to dental care to an area of the state that is underserved.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Board of Regents to study how the state can optimally meet the oral health needs of our citizens through the establishment of a school of dentistry in northern Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Regents shall submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to the Senate Committee on Education and the House Committee on Education by not later than ninety days prior to the beginning of the 2020 Regular Session of the Legislature.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the chairman of the Board of Regents and the commissioner of higher education.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE