

1 **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND**
2 **REMEMBERING THE FORGOTTEN PATIENTS OF THE**
3 **UTAH STATE HOSPITAL**

4 2017 GENERAL SESSION

5 STATE OF UTAH

6 **Chief Sponsor: Edward H. Redd**

7 Senate Sponsor: Curtis S. Bramble

8
9 **LONG TITLE**

10 **General Description:**

11 This concurrent resolution of the Legislature and the Governor supports efforts by the
12 staff of the Utah State Hospital and individuals and private entities to build and
13 maintain markers and monuments at the grave sites of former Utah State Hospital
14 patients and support ongoing use of evidence-based best practices and interventions to
15 treat Utahns suffering from mental illness and other complex diseases of the brain.

16 **Highlighted Provisions:**

17 This resolution:

- 18 ▶ expresses support for current efforts by staff of the Utah State Hospital to partner
19 with individuals and private entities to build and maintain appropriate markers and
20 monuments at the grave sites of former patients of the Utah State Hospital as a
21 tangible effort to appropriately recognize and remember their courageous and often
22 lonely struggle with mental illness during an earlier era when effective treatments
23 and hope for recovery were very limited and long-term institutionalization was often
24 the only viable intervention; and
- 25 ▶ honors the lives of these once-forgotten individuals who suffered immensely from
26 mental illness by continuing to support ongoing use of evidence-based best
27 practices and interventions to effectively treat citizens of Utah who are currently



28 suffering from mental illness and other complex diseases of the brain.

29 **Special Clauses:**

30 None

31

32 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:*

33 WHEREAS, the Utah State Hospital in Provo, Utah, began as the Territorial Insane
34 Asylum and admitted its first patients in 1885;

35 WHEREAS, the Utah State Hospital patient census climbed from 69 in 1886 to 314 in
36 1900, 1,310 in 1946, and to its peak of 1,500 patients in 1955;

37 WHEREAS, during the 133 years of its existence, staff and providers at the Utah State
38 Hospital have embraced and used resources and best practices available to do the best they
39 could to address the needs of persons with severe mental illness and other complex disorders of
40 the brain;

41 WHEREAS, during the 19th and early 20th centuries the science guiding the evaluation
42 and treatment of mental disorders was in its infancy and there was a substantial lack of
43 effective interventions to treat severe mental illness and other brain disorders;

44 WHEREAS, in the 19th and early 20th centuries the pervasive public perception was
45 that a person diagnosed with a mental illness would never recover;

46 WHEREAS, due to the severe hardships and challenges inherent in caring for a person
47 with uncontrolled severe mental illness, many families across the United States were
48 encouraged to essentially give up the care of their family members with mental illness and
49 place them in large private or state-run hospitals where most of them remained until they died;

50 WHEREAS, during the 19th and early 20th centuries, transportation needed to make
51 face-to-face visits was limited and arduous, and because of this, opportunities for personal
52 contact by family members and friends with patients at the Utah State Hospital were very
53 limited and this sometimes resulted in weakening of the emotional bonds that tie people and
54 families together;

55 WHEREAS, as a result of these insidious and deleterious effects on outside
56 relationships, some long-term institutionalized patients at the Utah State Hospital gradually lost
57 outside support and contact with family and friends and sometimes died while still residing at
58 the Utah State Hospital;

59 WHEREAS, during the 19th and early 20th centuries 474 such patients at the Utah
60 State Hospital died mostly alone and forgotten and were given paupers' burials in unmarked
61 graves located at the west end of the Prove City Cemetery;

62 WHEREAS, the names of these individuals and the locations of most of the graves are
63 currently known, but the graves remain unmarked and unknown to the general public;

64 WHEREAS, the understanding of mental illness and the ability to effectively treat
65 people with severe mental illness and other complex brain disorders such as epilepsy has
66 progressed immensely during the past 75 years;

67 WHEREAS, public perception of mental illness has matured to the point where most of
68 the general public see mental illnesses as brain disorders that can be successfully treated;

69 WHEREAS, with the advancement of science and the availability of effective
70 treatments in the mental health arena, the Utah State Hospital is no longer a place for long-term
71 custodial care of people with mental illness;

72 WHEREAS, the Utah State Hospital is now an institution dedicated to intensive
73 treatment of individuals with severe mental illness with the goal of healing and integration
74 back into the communities from whence they were referred; and

75 WHEREAS, had they been able to access and receive treatments and interventions
76 currently available in the 21st century, including improved quality of life and integration back
77 into their respective communities and families, many of the early patients at the Utah State
78 Hospital who were institutionalized until death and largely forgotten by society would have
79 experienced very different outcomes:

80 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
81 Governor concurring therein, representing the citizens of Utah, expresses support for current
82 efforts by staff of the Utah State Hospital to partner with individuals and private entities to
83 build and maintain appropriate markers and monuments at the grave sites of these incredible
84 people as a tangible effort to appropriately recognize and remember their courageous and often
85 lonely struggles with mental illness during an earlier era when effective treatments and hope
86 for recovery were very limited and long-term institutionalization was often the only viable
87 intervention.

88 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor honor the lives of
89 these once-forgotten individuals who suffered immensely from mental illness by continuing to

90 support ongoing use of evidence-based best practices and interventions to effectively treat
91 citizens of Utah who are currently suffering from mental illness and other complex diseases of
92 the brain.

93 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Utah State
94 Hospital and the Utah Department of Human Services.

Legislative Review Note
Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel