A resolution to oppose the Governor’s policies regarding the placement of COVID-19 patients into nursing homes.

Whereas, Before COVID-19 made its way into Michigan, one of the most important tasks was keeping the virus out of Michigan’s long-term care facilities. From a very early point, it was abundantly clear nursing home residents are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. The average age of Michigan nursing home residents is 82. Many of these elderly Michiganders have underlying health conditions, which make them more susceptible to the serious complications of COVID-19. Given the nature of nursing homes and the vulnerable status of residents, these facilities have become epicenters of COVID-19 in Michigan and across the country; and

Whereas, Despite knowledge of the significant vulnerabilities of residents in nursing homes to COVID-19, the Whitmer
administration was one of very few state administrations across the
country to implement a reckless and irresponsible policy that
placed COVID-19 residents into nursing homes that also housed non-
infected residents; and

Whereas, On April 15, 2020, Governor Whitmer signed Executive
Order 2020-50, which required long-term care facilities below 80
percent capacity to create "dedicated units" that are isolated
wards to treat medically stable COVID-19 residents. Nursing homes
without dedicated units were required to send medically stable
COVID-19 patients to nearby "regional hubs" if capacity allowed.
Under the order, a "regional hub" is "a nursing home that is
designated by [the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
(DHHS)] as a dedicated facility to temporarily and exclusively
provide care to COVID-affected residents." There are 21 regional
hubs across Michigan, more than 50 percent being located in
southeast Michigan where COVID-19 has been more prevalent; and

Whereas, The Whitmer administration is in the process of
approving two more regional hubs, despite the Governor admitting in
her own press conference and during testimony before a U.S. House
subcommittee that her nursing home policy has flaws. This puts even
more of Michigan’s most vulnerable individuals in harm’s way; and

Whereas, DHHS has estimated over 3,000 people of all ages who
meet eligibility criteria to receive skilled nursing care have been
discharged from hospitals or long-term care facilities to a
regional hub. Regional hubs also serve as primary residencies for
Michiganders; and

Whereas, The Governor’s policies placed COVID-19 patients into
nursing homes despite a lack of proper equipment, staffing levels,
and protocols to protect residents. In the beginning weeks of the
COVID-19 outbreak, the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) for long-term care facilities was severely scarce, and testing capabilities were limited. DHHS has admitted that, prior to new testing efforts, testing of both nursing home residents and caregivers was sporadic early on. Even worse, because nursing homes across the state were not required to provide dedicated staff for COVID-19 units, cross-contamination most likely occurred. Nursing homes with staffing shortages had no other option than to have caregivers alternate between COVID-19 wings and general population wings; and

Whereas, As more data is collected, we fear that hundreds of deaths in nursing homes will be attributed to the Whitmer administration’s policies. Recent state reports have indicated nursing home residents account for one-third of all COVID-19 deaths in Michigan. This percentage could be much higher, as the Whitmer administration has not been transparent about long-term care facility deaths. Data surrounding long-term care facilities was first reported to be "inaccurate" and "undercounted," and the data available to the public is far from complete; and

Whereas, Better alternatives were available to send COVID-19 patients. Prior to Executive Order 2020-50 being signed, the state entered two separate contracts to open field hospitals to serve as alternate care facilities. The Legislature originally approved the funding to equip the Governor and her administration with the flexibility they needed to care for COVID-19 patients and prevent local hospitals from exceeding capacity. The TCF Center in Detroit and the Suburban Collection Showplace in Novi were leased and retrofitted into field hospitals with the capability of housing up to 1,000 patients each. The monthly cost for each has been roughly
$1.1 million and $1.32 million per month in taxpayer dollars to lease. The TCF Center closed within a month of opening and after caring for a total of 39 patients. The Suburban Collection Showplace in Novi remains open and has cared for roughly 10 patients; and

Whereas, While the largely unused field hospitals cared for only about 50 patients total, regional hub nursing homes continue to take in COVID-19 patients. This is not just a mistake. It is a fatal error in decision-making. COVID-19 patients should be admitted into field hospitals where millions in taxpayer dollars are being spent to keep the Suburban Collection Showplace field hospital open; and

Whereas, The Governor continues to issue executive orders without changing course on this alarming policy. In fact, Executive Order 2020-123, issued June 15, 2020, stated long-term care facilities that have been deemed regional hubs "must accept COVID-19-affected residents..." This order, which remains in effect today, proves the Whitmer administration remains committed to this practice; and

Whereas, Concerns over the Governor’s COVID-19 nursing home policies are heightened because they were in place two months prior to DHHS mandating regular resident and caregiver testing or offering rapid response assistance to facilities facing urgent staffing shortages; and

Whereas, Several unanswered questions remain as to why this policy was ever allowed to exist in the first place. Such a policy is a blatant disregard for human life, and the people of Michigan deserve answers. As duly elected representatives of the people, our top priority is protecting the health and well-being of all
Michiganders. These are grandparents, parents, spouses, and siblings being put in danger. We are determined to make sure those involved in this fatal policy are held accountable and that the families impacted by it receive the answers they deserve; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we oppose the Governor’s policies regarding the placement of COVID-19 patients into nursing homes; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Governor.