

## The Lawsuit Challenging the Closure of Charity Hospital and the State's Failure to Replace the Care

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Are the petitioners demanding that all 21 floors of Charity Hospital be reopened?

**No.** The fundamental legal responsibility of the respondents is to replace the care. That can be done at Charity, if feasible, or it can be done at other sites within Charity's service area. Either way, or in combination, the respondents are required under state law to provide services and funding at a level equivalent to pre-closure. This has not happened since Charity's closure, and it is not happening now.

- Isn't Charity Hospital ruined beyond repair?

**No one really knows.** The respondents have refused to permit an impartial inspection of Charity Hospital, despite numerous requests over the past two years. What we do know is that, prior to its unilateral shutdown by respondents, hundreds of volunteers, aided by sophisticated cleanup equipment, worked around the clock for weeks to prepare Charity for reopening. The assessment by the United States Public Health Service and the Army Corps of Engineers at the time was that Charity was essentially ready to begin resuming care.

- LSU is planning a new hospital. Won't reopening Charity stand in the way?

**No.** LSU's plans to build a new hospital are entirely separate and distinct from this case. If and when the new hospital is built, it will be many, many years from now. This case addresses the question: what does New Orleans do in the meantime? The need for the care provided by Charity pre-closure is critical, immediate and enormous. This case requires the respondents to meet that need, nothing more or less.

- What is the most urgent health care need that this lawsuit addresses? Is it mental health care?

It is hard to pick out one need, because tens of thousands of our people are suffering chronic conditions without the care they need. Charity Hospital treated all those conditions and did it well. However, the mental health needs of New Orleans are huge. Our city and parish officials have spoken constantly about the crisis in mental health care post-Katrina. Before its closure, Charity Hospital was the hub of mental health care for the uninsured. It had a system that permitted treatment of people with severe mental illness without tying up precious police resources, and without bringing the criminal court system and the jails into the picture. Moreover, people with mental illness and other serious conditions could be treated efficiently at one hospital. All that is gone since Charity's closure.