

HOUSE No. 2190

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, BOSTON, May 25, 1915.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives.

I transmit herewith for your consideration a letter received by me yesterday from the Board of Trustees of the Norfolk State Hospital.

I recommend that the statements of the trustees be carefully weighed, and the appropriations at their disposal be sufficiently increased to place the institution under their charge upon a fully efficient and genuinely economical footing.

DAVID I. WALSH.

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR RELATIVE
TO APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE NORFOLK
STATE HOSPITAL.

BOSTON, May 25, 1915.

His Excellency Governor DAVID I. WALSH, *State House, Boston.*

MY DEAR GOVERNOR WALSH: — The Board of Trustees of the Norfolk State Hospital feel it their duty to call to your attention the serious financial condition of that institution.

The Norfolk Hospital was designed as a hospital and detention colony to accommodate five hundred inebriates and drug patients. As originally planned, the institution would have been completed and ready for occupancy in the spring of 1914. A desire by past legislatures, however, to postpone inevitable expenditures from year to year and thus to reduce one State tax at the expense of its successor, has caused many amendments to the original building plan. The result is that to-day, although the administration group of buildings is now approaching completion and the hospital has of necessity the large overhead expenditures of an institution in full operation, there are dormitories and hospital wards to care for only two hundred and fifty instead of five hundred patients. The temporary expedients which have been devised to make possible such postponement of the necessary expenditures for permanent construction, have not only decreased the efficiency of the present plant, but have unduly increased the present cost of maintenance. For example, independent heating appliances have been installed in separate buildings in order to postpone the cost of a permanent central heating plant. The construction of permanent hospital cottages has been put off, and, therefore, hospital patients have been placed in wooden cottages situated in a separate colony some distance from the main buildings and designed for the detention of confirmed

cases. Many of these patients are carried at large expense back and forth from their cottages to the administration group daily by horse and automobile. A stove and temporary dining quarters have been placed in the basement of the administration building in order to postpone the cost of the dining hall which is ultimately necessary. All of these and other similar modifications in the general plan of the hospital were regarded by the Board of Trustees as embodying at best a short-sighted policy, and as a result the following resolution at that time was placed on our records and submitted to the Governor:—

The reduced appropriation would in no sense permit the completion of the work in the form originally planned and submitted to the various state authorities; it would, however, probably enable the Trustees to remove at an earlier date all the inebriate patients from Foxborough to the new hospital in Norfolk, but the members of the Board present unanimously express their opinion that the larger appropriation originally submitted would in the end prove more economical, and that the smaller appropriation reported by the Committee on Public Charitable Institutions, would necessarily involve further substantial expenses before the installation of the new hospital plant was satisfactorily accomplished.

In one year changes in building plans and appropriations were made without giving a hearing to this Board.

In June, 1914, in accordance with the provisions of a statute passed by the legislature of that year, approximately two hundred and fifty patients were transferred from the Foxboro State Hospital to the unfinished Norfolk Hospital. The buildings of the former institution were then appropriated to the care of the insane. Our Board, of course, recognized that the administration of a half completed hospital, like beginning to live in a private house before the builders are out of it, would be very inconvenient and expensive. The overhead charges would be divided among but half of the patients for whom they were designed; yet, a superintendent, doctors, engineers, firemen, steward, bookkeeper, farmer and other general employees must be maintained. We were not mistaken. Lack of proper accommodation for drug cases has made it necessary that they should be associated

closely with the inebriates. This has been demoralizing and injurious to each class of patients. The patients in the hospital group who were able to leave their beds have been required to take their meals in the basement of the administration building, a practice the continuance of which the Board believes most unwise. In spite of the fact that, in comparison with other institutions, purchases have been made upon a most satisfactory basis, the weekly per capita expense in 1914 has been \$11.65.

The Board undertook the operation of an incomplete institution because it assumed that with adequate appropriations in 1915, an efficient hospital unit would be created which might be expected to show satisfactory results at a reasonable cost. The Legislature, however, has not only declined to appropriate any money for construction purposes, but what is far more serious, has cut our maintenance appropriation from the sum of \$133,760 recommended by the Board to \$117,900, a cut of approximately 12%. Your Excellency will recall, however, that pending the passing of maintenance bills, institutions are authorized to spend a fixed proportion of their total expenditures during the previous year. This means that the difference between the estimate of the trustees and the actual appropriation for 1915 will have to be saved in seven months instead of twelve. In other words, the action of the Legislature really involves a cut of expenditures between May and December of approximately 20%. We have already reduced the number of our patients at the hospital and have closed one dormitory in spite of the fact that commitments and applications for treatment far exceed our capacity. It is possible to continue postponing necessary expenditures for maintenance which will ultimately be necessary and thus reduce immediate bills by \$6,725, but such a saving would handicap the proper administration of the hospital and, in our opinion, is wholly inexpedient and fundamentally uneconomical. For instance, \$3,700 of this amount will be saved if we purchase only enough coal to last us until the end of November instead of during the winter. But this immediate saving will be an ultimate extravagance for it will

necessitate the purchase of coal at the beginning of the winter when the cost is much higher than it is to-day. We cannot, however, make further cuts in our estimate except by such reductions in the number of patients as to make the hospital a very limited service, or by making inadequate expenditures for the upkeep and maintenance of the plant. It is obvious that a further reduction of patients will cause an even higher cost per capita and inevitable criticism of the institution. Meantime, we are in receipt of a letter from the State Auditor in which he says that "any expenses incurred in excess of this amount (appropriated by the legislature for maintenance) constitutes a violation of law."

The fundamental short-sightedness of postponing inevitable expenditures until another year is illustrated by the fact that if the hospital unit were completed by the construction of dormitories for two hundred and fifty more patients, the weekly cost per capita would drop approximately \$3.50. This means a saving in one year in the care of the two hundred and fifty patients for whom we now have beds of approximately \$43,000, — a sum sufficient to build and equip five permanent hospital cottages fitted to hold twenty-five patients each, or one hundred and twenty-five patients in all.

Under the circumstances, we feel that the situation is sufficiently serious to receive your careful consideration. We do not care to become law breakers, but in the interest of the State we cannot take the responsibility of failing to make adequate provision for the patients committed to our care. We wish so far as we can to adapt ourselves to the present financial situation of the Commonwealth. We have found the administration of the Foxboro Hospital and of the Norfolk Hospital an interesting and inspiring service. Their surprisingly successful records in the redemption of inebriates has been most stimulating. The generous recognition from all parts of the country of the leadership of Massachusetts in the state care of those addicted to drink is a source of gratification. The establishment by other states of similar institutions founded upon what is known to them as "The Massachusetts' Plan" assures us that the institution is

founded upon a sound principle. We trust that your Excellency will find some way in which the hospital may continue to perform the service for which it was designed.

Very truly yours,

W. RODMAN PEABODY, *Chairman,*

ROBERT A. WOODS,

EDWIN MULREADY,

FRANK A. LOCKE,

JAMES A. PHELAN,

PHILIP R. ALLEN,

Board of Trustees of the Norfolk State Hospital.