Dear Mr. Jones,

I would first like to take the opportunity to thank you for contacting me with your concerns regarding the Children's Special Health Services clinics. As you know, these clinics provide some very important services to their patients, and in many areas of the state, these clinics are the only access that children may have to certain specialist and sub-specialty care. After receiving your email, I spoke directly with the secretary of the Department of Health and Hospitals to get a better understanding of the current status of these clinics and to impress upon him how important these clinics are to roughly 4,500 individuals across the state who utilize their services.

As you may know, the state is facing a very serious budgetary shortfall this upcoming fiscal year. The Department of Health and Hospitals is having to make a number of reductions in the services they provide across the board. The main goal is identifying those situations where the services can be maintained but can be provided in a more fiscally responsible manner. The department explained to me that in New Orleans the CSHS clinic was being operated by physicians and medical personnel from Children's Hospital and it made more fiscal sense to provide these services out of physicians offices directly rather than at a stand alone clinic. The department indicated to me that there was no change in the services just a change in where the services were provided. The secretary has assured me that in no case will a clinic be closed if there is not an alternative setting where services may still be received.

At this point in time, the Department of Health and Hospitals is formulating their budget for the next fiscal year. Until the point in time that the department releases their budget, I have no way of knowing what changes that may be in store for these clinics in the upcoming fiscal year. However, I can assure you that I will be vigilant in protecting the services provided by the clinics to the many people, like Alexis, who depend on them the most. It is vital that these services are provided and it is vital that the state provide the services in the most efficient manner possible.

The children of this state are my highest priority so please let Alexis know that I will do whatever I can to ensure that the services she needs remain in place. I know she is very proud to have such an outstanding father and advocate on her behalf. Thank you again for sharing your concerns with me, and because of you and Alexis, I will keep a careful eye on the level of services being provided by the clinics and will do everything I can to make sure these services
remain in place. Please don't hesitate to contact my office if you have any further information about these services.

I hope you and your family have a wonderful holiday season.

Sincerely,

Willie Mount
State Senator