

New Orleans' University Medical Center opening delayed until Aug. 1

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University Medical Center, New Orleans' much-anticipated new public hospital, has postponed its expected opening from May to Aug. 1, a hospital system spokeswoman said Tuesday (March 10).

Leaders of LCMC Health, the private company that will manage the new \$1.1 billion hospital, were already in discussion about the possible delay before Gov. Bobby Jindal's budget proposal last month to keep financing flat for LSU's privatized hospitals, said state Rep. Walt Leger III, D-New Orleans.

But Leger said he believes Jindal's proposal for fiscal 2016 added pressure to the hospital's considerations and forced LCMC to take more time.

"I certainly believe there are logistical issues," Leger said. "But it's hard to separate the budgetary challenges from the logistical considerations."

Greg Feirn, CEO of LCMC, was not immediately available Tuesday morning to speak about the delay, but he is expected to discuss the hospital's opening with NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune on Tuesday afternoon.

The Jindal's administration plan for the fiscal year that begins July 1 amounts to \$88 million less than LCMC requested for the New Orleans hospital, which is expected to assume and expand existing patient care offered through Interim LSU Hospital, Leger said.

During the hearing before the Louisiana Legislature's joint budget committee, Leger immediately questioned the state's commitment to funding the public-private partnerships at the level the state hospitals require.

Asked about the concern afterward, Calder Lynch, chief of staff for the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, said that the funding plan is subject to change. "This budget is a starting point and we're going to continue to work with them to see if there's a way to sustain that."

In a written statement, Feirn last week told the Associated Press that the funding poses a huge concern: "If the state does not restore the funding, then the state is deciding not to allow for care for the people of New Orleans, deciding not to open their state-of-the-art facility that is nearly finished and striking a crippling blow to medical education in Louisiana."

Stay tuned to NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune today as we update this story with more information, including details from LCMC.



A March 10, 2015, screen capture from earthcam.com shows construction progress on University Medical Center. The hospital has a new target opening date of Aug. 1, a spokeswoman said. (Earthcam.com and Interim LSU Hospital)