§ 3626. Legislative findings and declarations. The legislature hereby finds and declares as follows:

1. Currently, the Erie County Medical Center is a public hospital owned and operated by the county of Erie.

2. The Erie County Medical Center healthcare network includes a general hospital, the Erie County Home, and several clinics in Erie county.

3. The Erie County Medical Center is a tertiary care facility for Erie county and the seven other counties in western New York and an affiliated hospital of the health science center at Buffalo of the state university of New York. As such, the Erie County Medical Center serves as an integral part of the education and research mission of the state university and fulfills an important public purpose. The Erie County Medical Center provides the health science center at Buffalo with the clinical settings essential to the fulfillment of its public mission to educate and train physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals, conducts critical research, and delivers health care services to the residents of the western New York region.

4. The Erie County Medical Center is the only major public hospital in western New York and provides certain sophisticated and specialized patient care services not available in other area hospitals. As the regional level I trauma center for the eight counties of western New York, the Erie County Medical Center has earned a reputation for high quality care. The comprehensive program also features the region's only burn treatment center, a designated spinal cord injury unit, and a head trauma unit. Trauma services are supported by a broad scope of rehabilitation, home care, and outpatient services. The Erie County Medical Center also is the designated AIDS treatment center for the eight counties of western New York, the central point of admission into the local mental health community, and the largest acute care mental health hospital program in western New York. The Erie County Medical Center is the leading provider of inpatient and outpatient medical rehabilitation services in western New York, a major center for

undergraduate and graduate medical education, and a productive source of clinical and basic science research in rehabilitation medicine. The Erie County Medical Center also is a recognized leader in providing quality medical care to the elderly. The Erie County Medical Center healthcare network's geriatric services program includes the area's only acute inpatient geriatric unit and nearly eight hundred long term care beds at both the Erie county home in Alden and a skilled nursing unit at the Erie County Medical Center.

5. The needs of the residents of the state of New York and of the county of Erie can best be served by the operation of the Erie County Medical Center healthcare network through a public benefit corporation having the legal, financial, and managerial flexibility to take full advantage of opportunities and challenges presented by the evolving health care environment.

6. In order to accomplish the purposes recited in this section of providing health care services and health facilities for the benefit of the residents of the state of New York and the county of Erie, including persons in need of health care services without the ability to pay, as required by law, a public benefit corporation to be known as the Erie County Medical Center Corporation shall be created to provide such services and facilities and to otherwise carry out such purposes. The creation and operation of the Erie County Medical Center Corporation, as provided in this title, is in all respects for the benefit of the people of the state of New York and of the county of Erie and is a state, county, and public purpose. The exercise by such corporation of the functions, powers, and duties provided in this title constitutes the performance of an essential public and governmental function.

7. In authorizing the Erie County Medical Center healthcare network to be operated through a public benefit corporation, it is intended that the hospital continue as a general, municipal hospital available to the residents of the city of Buffalo, county of Erie, and western New York state generally, that the health care services provided by the Erie County Medical Center healthcare network's hospital, clinics, long term care facilities, and ancillary facilities by dedicated public employees

who treat tens of thousands of New York residents annually will continue, and that the network's role as a leading provider of services to medicaid patients will also continue.