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For Immediate Release
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ERLANGER, WALKER COUNTY AGREE TO SETTLE DEBT

LAFAYETTE, GA – Officials with Walker County and the Erlanger Health System have agreed to settle an \$8.7 million debt stemming from a loan commitment made by the previous Walker County administration. Former Walker County Commissioner Bebe Heiskell pledged taxpayer dollars to cover this loan to Erlanger in 2011, as part of an intergovernmental agreement with the Hutcheson Medical Center board.

As part of the full settlement, Erlanger will waive interest and attorney fees awarded in its federal judgment against Walker County, and the County has agreed to make payments of \$650,000 for 12 quarters, starting in January 2018. Walker County will make a 13th and final payment of \$900,000 to Erlanger by the end of 2020, according to the terms of the full settlement.

"I am deeply appreciative for the empathy shown by Erlanger toward the people of Walker County," said Sole Commissioner Shannon Whitfield. "Our citizens didn't get the county into the financial mess we are working to correct, but they are being asked to help dig us out. By allowing Walker County to pay off this debt over three years, we understand that Erlanger recognizes real people are making real sacrifices," he said.

Erlanger President & CEO Kevin M. Spiegel, FACHE, said, "With Walker County's commitment to repay the full amount due today, Erlanger is pleased to conclude these negotiations and waive both the interest and attorney fees. We remain committed to caring for patients from Northwest Georgia, and will continue to look for opportunities to partner with Commissioner Whitfield and the good citizens of Walker County."

Jack Studer, Chairman of the Hamilton County Chattanooga Board of Trustees, also expressed his gratitude for the settlement agreement between Erlanger and Walker County. "I am appreciative of the leadership from both Commissioner Whitfield and CEO Kevin Spiegel for putting our two great organizations on more solid footing for the future." Studer added, "Erlanger is honored to serve North Georgia, and looks forward to continuing to provide world-class care to everyone in Walker County."

Commissioner Whitfield said, "This agreement will save the county nearly \$580,000, and gives our taxpayers peace of mind. We have reached a full settlement that allows us to make payments and brings closure to an issue that has concerned our community."