

One Health Leadership, PLLC

428 South Main St., Suite B, Unit #1004 – Davidson, NC 28036

Valerie Jarvis, Chair, Long-Term and Behavioral Health Committee
J. Cooper Linton, Vice Chair, Long-Term and Behavioral Health Committee
State Health Coordinating Council
Healthcare Planning and Certificate of Need Section
Division of Health Service Regulation
2704 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-2704

Dear Ms. Jarvis and Mr. Linton:

It is our distinct pleasure to write and voice our strong support for the petition filed by Heart’N Soul Hospice to include an adjusted need determination in the 2024 State Medical Facilities Plan for one additional hospice home care agency in Mecklenburg County focused on serving historically underserved racial and ethnic minority populations.

As a group of active providers with 15+ locations and 90+ providers that serve the racially and ethnically diverse population of Mecklenburg County, we recognize the important role that culturally competent healthcare providers play in reducing health disparities and improving quality of life for patients and their loved ones, particularly for terminally ill individuals. We can attest to the clear need for culturally competent hospice home care services in our community; and believe that Heart’N Soul brings compassionate care models to our delivery system. Reducing racial and ethnic disparities is a critical priority and is essential to delivering effective health and human services in Mecklenburg County. With a focus on serving minority populations, we believe the Heart’N Soul petition seeks to provide improved access to hospice services for underserved members of Mecklenburg County.

Having met with Heart’N Soul multiple times, we see such needed alignment with OneHealth’s own vision of increasing longevity, quality, and reducing burden-FOR ALL. Specifically, Heart’N Soul’s desire to ensure high quality care for individuals of historically underserved communities resonates with our own.

While the existing Mecklenburg County hospice agencies serve a considerable number of patients in and around Mecklenburg County, there continues to be a large number of minority residents, particularly those over age 65 who are more likely to require end-of-life care and that have endured decades of inequality, resulting in a lack of trust in medical institutions that makes it particularly challenging to gain acceptance to deliver care in their home. The unique reluctance of this population, coupled with limited education regarding hospice services and a lack of representation amongst healthcare providers, have unfortunately resulted in an unmet need for hospice care among the large number of minority residents in Mecklenburg County. Heart’N Soul’s petition seeks to ameliorate this issue by creating an adjusted need determination to address the provision of hospice care for historically marginalized individuals in the comfort of their own homes. By providing a team of dedicated caregivers that share lived experiences through racial, ethnic, and/or religious cultural identities, terminally ill patients and their loved ones can be assured of having access to and receiving a more comfortable, convenient, and affirming approach to end-of-life care.

Mecklenburg County residents would greatly benefit from access to a hospice home care agency focused on and equipped to provide culturally competent hospice home care services. Currently, such an agency does not exist. At the end of life, culturally competent hospice home care providers, like Heart’N Soul, can help reduce disparities in access to and utilization of hospice services amongst minorities and create safe spaces for terminally ill patients and their loved ones to love and grieve while being supported by a diverse and

compassionate care team that understands the nuanced differences between racial, ethnic, and religious minorities with respect to dying with dignity and comfort. As such, we fully support and endorse Heart’N Soul Hospice’s petition.

Sincerely,

Signature: *Kelly B. Garrison*

Name: Kelly B. Garrison, MBA, MHA
Chief of Strategy & Development
OneHealth Leadership, PLLC