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**Presentation of CHRIS COMEAUX,
President & CEO, Four Seasons Hospice**

Four Seasons Hospice joins with CarePartners Hospice to petition the State of North Carolina to grant our request for a special need adjustment for six hospice inpatient beds for Buncombe County.

Four Seasons Hospice has operated a hospice inpatient facility (known as Elizabeth House) in Flat Rock in Henderson County since April of 1999, when it opened with six hospice residential beds and six hospice inpatient beds. In the spring of 2006, construction began to expand the Elizabeth House by six beds for a total complement of 18 beds – 12 inpatient and six residential. Most recently, in December 2008, the six residential hospice bedrooms were converted to seven inpatient beds for a total bed complement of 19 inpatient hospice beds.

The Elizabeth House is a central part of our program for providing the highest quality hospice care to the patients in our service area and to their families and loved ones.

However, The Elizabeth House is not in Buncombe County and the majority of towns in Buncombe County are more than 30 minutes away from the Elizabeth House under the best of travel conditions. That's just a one way trip, and in this part of North Carolina, travel conditions are not always "the best." A round trip of 60 minutes or more is an unacceptable hardship for family members who may wish to visit loved ones on a daily basis at the end of life.

So our Elizabeth House is not an accessible alternative when hospice inpatient beds are full in Buncombe County. Similarly, hospices facilities in Clyde (in Haywood County) and in Forest City (in Rutherford County) are not adequately accessible to the residents of Buncombe County. All the details are in our petition, but the bottom-line is that, when Buncombe County residents need more hospice inpatient beds, these beds need to be in Buncombe County.

The alternative to inpatient hospice care is an expensive and unnecessary hospital admission. A 2007 Duke University study found that hospice use reduced Medicare program expenditures during the last year of life by an average of \$2,039 per hospice user. We think this is a conservative estimate. But hospice care not only is less expensive than the alternative, it is far more humane and compassionate.

We need to be able to provide effective control of pain and symptoms all of our patients, including the most severely ill and medically compromised.

Our petition includes letters of support from many providers in Buncombe County, including the largest hospital provider, who recognize the value of hospice care in general, and the value of inpatient hospice care in particular.

We are proud to stand with these providers, and with our co-petitioner and colleague, CarePartners Hospice to urge the State of North Carolina to grant our petition for a special need adjustment for six hospice inpatient beds for Buncombe County.