

**UNC Hospice  
Public Hearing Presentation  
August 1, 2012**

Brown Building, 810 Biggs Dr., Raleigh NC

Good afternoon. My name is Laura C. Hanson and I am a Professor of Geriatric Medicine, and Co-Director of the Palliative Care Program at UNC School of Medicine. I am board certified in Internal Medicine, Geriatric Medicine and Palliative Medicine. I have over 20 years of patient care experience, including many patients each year facing the choice of hospice care. As Co-Director of our hospital's Palliative Care Program, I consult with patients and families who are making the decision to focus on comfort as their primary goal and who transition from hospital care to hospice.

The UNC Health System provides an extensive scope of hospice and palliative care services. UNC Hospice, as part of the UNC system, has given quality, compassionate care to thousands of people living with life-limiting illnesses and their families since 1984. Our Hospice offices are located in Pittsboro in Chatham County and in Chapel Hill in Orange County. The UNC Hospice program takes an integrated team approach while helping patients manage their pain and other symptoms in order to live as fully and comfortably as possible.

According to the proposed 2013 North Carolina State Medical Facilities Plan, Chatham County has a need determination for six inpatient hospice beds. This potential need determination is based on the standard methodology for hospice inpatient beds. However, this potential need determination could be eliminated by changes to the hospice utilization data submitted by a provider, by an unknown mathematical error in the formula or even by the elimination of the need determination in response to a petition or comments. Our petition is submitted to safeguard the need determination for six inpatient hospice beds in Chatham County.

We are convinced that six inpatient hospice beds are needed in Chatham County based on multiple factors.

First of all, demand for hospice care continues to increase due to demographic factors. Over 20 percent of the population in Chatham County is over the age of 65 years, considerably higher than the statewide average of 13.7 percent. Also, the mortality rate for the Chatham population is higher than the statewide rate and is one of the highest in the region – a finding likely attributable to the aging of those living in this county.

Secondly, the lack of inpatient hospice beds within Chatham County causes hardships for patients and family members due to travel distances. Many low income and older adults lack access to transportation to reach hospice facilities in other counties. I have personally talked with dozens of patients and families who face the agonizing choice to travel far from loved ones to seek best care – for them, this means inpatient hospice – or to compromise on the quality of care while remaining where they can visit with family as they die.

Thirdly, residents of Chatham County do not have reasonable access to inpatient hospice due to the high occupancy levels of the existing hospice inpatient beds in contiguous counties.

And fourth, we have obtained widespread community support for the development of these six inpatient hospice beds. Physicians, residents of Chatham County and hospital leaders have documented their support for these beds.

UNC Hospice predicts that without the allocation of six hospice inpatient beds to Chatham County, either through the standard methodology or by an adjusted need

determination, the following adverse effects will occur:

Patients and families will lack adequate and timely access to specialized inpatient hospice services.

Occupancy of the existing inpatient beds in adjoining counties will likely continue to increase, resulting in the hospices' inability to accommodate requests for admission by Chatham residents.

Acute care lengths of stay for some patients at local hospitals will be extended, causing unnecessary expenditures to the healthcare system.

I also want to take this opportunity to read to a couple of quotes from the letters we have received in support of allocation of six hospice inpatient bed for Chatham County.

From Tonya Wilson Thompson, MSW, LCSW, Daughter of a Hospice Patient

*"Our closest options for inpatient hospice were Hillsborough or Durham. We felt very frustrated that after we had developed a strong relationship with the staff at UNC Hospice, in my father's last days, we had to change hospice agencies."*

From John Justice, UNC Hospice Volunteer

*"As a family member that was served by Hospice while my dad was dying, I saw firsthand what a difference hospice makes. He died at home as his wish. But not everyone can do that. For these people, and for that very brief time, there needs to be a comfortable place to die with dignity."*

From Jessica Fines, MSW

*"Offering at least six inpatient hospice beds in Chatham County would allow an individual to remain in their community while still being able to receive the needed support and services offered by hospice- completing the continuum of care for that individual."*

From Philip Culpepper, Consulting Planner for Chatham Park

*“ As the Consulting Planner for a major development proposed in Chatham County, I am aware that Chatham County will be receiving much of the growth that is destined for this region. It has been suggested that Chatham County may double in population in less than twenty years. With this growth will come the increased need for Hospice care.”*

In summary, UNC Hospice submits this petition to ensure that in 2013 there will be an opportunity to submit a CON application to develop a new hospice facility with six inpatient beds to be located in Chatham County. The citizens of Chatham County need and deserve an inpatient hospice facility.