

Oral Remarks of Lucas Romine, M.D. – EmergeOrtho, P.A.
**Supporting an Adjusted Need Petition for Two Additional Operating Rooms in
Johnston County in the 2023 State Medical Facilities Plan**

Submitted for the July 25, 2022 Hearing on the Draft 2023 SMFP

Good afternoon. My name is Lucas Romine. I am an orthopedic surgeon with EmergeOrtho, and I care for patients here in the Triangle Region, including in Johnston County. I appreciate this opportunity to briefly speak about the draft 2023 State Medical Facilities Plan, and **a petition that EmergeOrtho will be submitting for an adjusted need determination for two additional operating rooms in the Johnston County OR service area.**

EmergeOrtho is the largest physician-owned orthopedic practice in North Carolina. Our medical team includes over 270 highly-trained providers, including orthopedic specialists, pain management physicians, advanced practice providers, and physical and occupational therapists. Our subspecialty orthopedic teams care for patients across North Carolina, offering advanced expertise in conditions of the bones, muscles, and joints.

In Johnston County, EmergeOrtho operates two clinics located in Clayton and Smithfield. During the past 12 months, EmergeOrtho surgeons performed over 1,700 outpatient surgical procedures on Johnston County residents. Based on our experience providing healthcare services in Johnston County, we see a need for improved local access to ambulatory surgical services for residents of Johnston County. **The Draft 2023 SMFP does not reflect this.**

Johnston County is a rapidly growing county. In fact, between 2010 and 2020, no other North Carolina county grew at a higher percentage increase than Johnston County. The county population is growing at a much faster rate than the overall North Carolina population, with a projected 5-year compound annual growth rate that is more than twice the projected population growth rate of North Carolina. Not surprisingly, along with this population growth has been an increase in ambulatory surgery cases. During the past five years, ambulatory surgery cases in Johnston County increased at a compound annual growth rate of 3.86%.

Johnston County is the 12th most populous of the 100 North Carolina counties. Despite this, Johnston County has no ambulatory surgery centers, while other North Carolina counties of similar population host at least one, two, or even three of those facilities. Because of this lack of an ASC, Johnston County residents are leaving Johnston County to obtain ambulatory surgical services. The Division of Health Service Regulation's Patient Origin Report indicates that only 40% of Johnston County residents who had outpatient surgery obtained the surgery within Johnston County. In fact, in 2021, more Johnston County residents (4,677) traveled to Wake County for ambulatory surgery than remained in the county (4,541). **As somebody who provides these services to members of this community and as somebody who lives in this community, I am troubled by the lack of local access to ambulatory surgical services.**

Approval of our petition and a change in the OR need determination would result in enhanced access to local surgical services options. Within Johnston County, residents currently have only one option for access to surgical services: at a UNC

Health Johnston facility, where all the operating rooms are hospital-based. Costs and charges are much higher in a hospital setting than in a freestanding, non-hospital-based ASC setting. A 2023 SMFP need determination for two additional operating rooms in Johnston County would enable a new provider to enter the county and develop a freestanding ambulatory surgery center, thus providing competition, which is good for healthcare consumers, and good for healthcare providers.

In summary, EmergeOrtho believes that approval of our petition is in the best interests of Johnston County residents. Additional operating rooms in Johnston County will not result in unnecessary duplication, and is supportive of the quality, access, and value Basic Principles of the State Medical Facilities Plan.

EmergeOrtho appreciates the thoughtful consideration of the State Health Coordinating Council to these comments today and to our forthcoming Petition. We would respectfully urge its approval.

Thank you.