



Well Care HEALTH

Wednesday, August 9, 2023

North Carolina Division of Health Service Regulation Healthcare Planning
2704 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2704
Attn: State Health Coordinating Council

Re: Opposition to Special Needs Petition by Heart and Soul Hospice of the Carolinas, LLC

Long-Term and Behavioral Health Committee Members,


I am writing on behalf of Well Care Health (“Well Care”), to express our firm opposition to the Petition filed by Heart and Soul Hospice of the Carolinas, LLC. We offer this letter for your consideration as a family-owned and operated provider of Home Health, Home Care, and Hospice Home Care services that has served communities across the Carolinas for more than 35 years. Today, we serve 40+ counties in the Carolinas and employ more than 800 team members, with a patient census of more than 4,000 patients.

Specifically, in opposing this Special Needs Petition, we would like to express the following points:

- **Well Care reiterates its longstanding support of North Carolina’s Certificate of Need framework and its standard need methodology, consistent with the eight licensed hospice home care agencies in Mecklenburg County.** The standard need methodology ensures a sufficient number of hospices serve Mecklenburg County and all 100 North Carolina counties and that these hospices can provide quality, cost-effective care. Based on available data, another hospice home care agency in Mecklenburg County would not support the CON law’s statutory principles of access, quality, and value.
- **Approval of this type of Special Needs Petition would undermine North Carolina’s well-established Certificate of Need framework and create a slippery slope under which a presumable tidal wave of future Special Needs Petitions focused on specific patient populations would follow.** Mecklenburg County is currently served by at least 24 licensed hospice home care agencies, all with ongoing initiatives to increase patient access and promote health equity. North Carolina’s licensed hospices are engaged in initiatives to increase hospice utilization among historically underserved populations, including the African American population, and these initiatives are required as part of existing hospices’ accreditation and Medicare certification.
- **The underutilization of hospice by the African American population is a complex and national problem, and not unique to Mecklenburg County or North Carolina.** While Well Care strongly supports patient access and health equity on behalf of all patient populations, including the African American population, the Petitioner fails to demonstrate that its proposed new Special Need Determination is the best path to meet this objective. Specifically, the Petitioner fails to: (1) show that the established methodology is flawed or fails to provide sufficient access to hospice; or (2) articulate why adding another need determination would improve access to hospice.

For the above reasons, Well Care respectfully requests that this Petition be denied in the same way a similar petition was dismissed in 2017.

Respectfully,


Zac Long, JD, MHA
CEO & General Counsel
Well Care Health