



## MECKLENBURG COUNTY OFFICE OF THE COUNTY MANAGER

September 12, 2023

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:

I am writing to voice my 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.

Those of us who live and work in Mecklenburg County can attest to the clear need for culturally competent hospice home care services in our community. As the Mecklenburg County Manager, committed to serving the racially and ethnically diverse population of Mecklenburg County, I 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. Reducing racial and ethnic disparities is a critical priority and essential to delivering effective health and human services in Mecklenburg County. With a focus on serving minority populations, the Heart’N Soul petition seeks to provide improved access to hospice services for underserved members of Mecklenburg County.

While the existing Mecklenburg County hospice agencies serve a considerable number of patients in and around Mecklenburg County, there continues to be many 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, I fully support Heart'N Soul Hospice's petition.

Sincerely,

*Dena R. Diorio*

Dena R. Diorio  
Mecklenburg County Manager