

**SHCC Public Hearing Presentation Comments for a Special Need
Petition for Five Inpatient Hospice Beds in Buncombe County**

Presented by Tracy Buchanan, CEO

CarePartners Health Services

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Good afternoon. My name is Tracy Buchanan, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of CarePartners Health Services. CarePartners Health Services provides a full continuum of post-acute care including an Inpatient Rehabilitation Hospital, Outpatient Rehabilitation, Home Health, Hospice and Palliative Care, Adult Day Care and Private Duty Services.

I am here today to speak regarding our special need petition for an adjustment of five additional inpatient hospice beds in Buncombe County in the 2010 State Medical Facilities Plan. We will be submitting the petition to the Medical Facilities Planning Section by the July 31 deadline.

Let me give you some background on our Hospice program. CarePartners Hospice was created in 1980 as a non-profit, community-based agency focusing on providing care for the terminally ill. Our mission is to help people live fully through life's journey. We provide physical, emotional, and spiritual support to enable individuals to die with dignity in the comfort of their home, other residence, or in our inpatient Solace Center. We also provide continued support for those who are grieving. We have nearly 30 years of experience providing hospice home care services to local residents, and 20 years of experience providing hospice care in the inpatient setting.

Our Solace Center is a 27-bed facility. We operate 15 inpatient beds and 12 residential beds. Our inpatient beds have had a 100% occupancy rate for the past several years. The Proposed 2010 State Medical Facilities Plan identifies a need for five additional inpatient hospice beds in Buncombe County. However, the Certificate of Need process is only opened up when six beds are identified. In our petition we request a special needs adjustment to this rule, and ask to be able to apply for a CON for the five beds that have been identified. Our petition will provide a detailed rationale, but I would like to highlight several reasons for our petition here today.

First, CarePartners Hospice has sufficient volume to support the addition of five inpatient beds. Our inpatient beds are used at full capacity, so people often have to be placed on a waiting list. Since October, 67 people have had to wait two or more days to be admitted to the Solace Center. On one day last week we had seven people in acute care hospitals waiting for an inpatient bed.

Second, remaining in the hospital while waiting for a hospice bed makes the patient's care less effective and more costly. According to a study by Duke University, hospice care saves Medicare over \$2,300 per patient compared with conventional care at the end of life. The Duke study concludes that the hospice model is that rare case where something that improves quality of life appears also to reduce costs. We believe residents of Buncombe County deserve the best possible care at the end of life, and adding five inpatient beds will allow us to serve more people in a more timely and cost effective way.

Third, adding inpatient hospice beds will not cause unnecessary duplication of services. There is sufficient demand for services, and CarePartners Hospice is the only provider of hospice care in Buncombe County.

These are just the highlights of our reasons for requesting a special need adjustment in the 2010 Plan. Our petition is supported by the local acute care hospital, physicians, and the wider community. These views will be expressed in the letters of support included with our written petition which will be submitted by July 31.

We hope you will support us and our community by approving our special needs petition, and allowing us the opportunity to continue to serve all who need hospice care in Buncombe County. Thank you for coming to Asheville and providing me with the opportunity to discuss this important issue.