



Graham County Department of Social Services

**196 Knight Street
Robbinsville, NC 28771**

**Butch Sanders, MSW
Director**

**Telephone 828.479.7911
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August 10, 2016

T. J. Pulliam, MD, Chair
Long Term Care Committee
C/O Ms. Paige Bennet, Assistant Chief
Healthcare Planning
Division of Health Service Regulation
2704 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2704

Re: Letter in support of an adjusted need determination to be included in the 2017 State Medical Facilities Plan (SMFP) for a new dialysis facility in Graham County, North Carolina

Dear Dr. T.J. Pulliam,

I am writing this letter to express support for the adjusted need determination proposed to be included in the 2017 State Medical Facilities Plan (SMFP) for a new dialysis facility in Graham County.

I am the Director of the Department of Social Services for Graham County, and in that capacity I have been fortunate to work with and for the people of this county. Acquiring a dialysis facility in Graham County will prevent much of the hardship currently faced by our patients who must face challenges and difficulties in addition to the constant pressure, tension and stress associated with dialysis needs. As an enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and a clinical social worker for many years with Indian Health Service, I have many years of experience working with Cherokee diabetics and dialysis participants in this community. We have come a long way in this regard since the 70's. However, a local facility would improve the quality of life and daily living for many of our residents and families.

The residents of this County, and our many visitors to the mountains on extended visits who need dialysis services to stay alive, must travel substantial times and distances to surrounding facilities in Sylva, Murphy, Cherokee, or Waynesville, North Carolina for treatment. For example, a resident of Robbinsville, Graham County must travel 74 miles, roundtrip, to the dialysis facility in Cherokee, North Carolina, or 68 miles roundtrip, to the facility in Murphy, North Carolina. These are the two closest facilities.

The long drives are not easy. Distances which appear on maps to be but a few miles involve circuitous routes along roads filled with sharp curves and steep grades. The roads through Graham County run through rugged mountainous country and are extremely dangerous when wet or when snow, ice, and/or foggy conditions are present.

These types of hardships have material and negative impacts on quality of life for both Graham residents who need dialysis services and those who assist them in traveling to the dialysis facilities. This is an excellent proposal for a much needed service. I urge the Division of Health Service Regulation to approve the adjusted need determination.

If I can answer any questions, or be of any further assistance in this matter, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Butch Sanders". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Butch Sanders, MSW
Director
Graham County Department of Social Services