



December 20, 2016

Governor-Elect Roy Cooper  
North Carolina Office of the Governor  
20301 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-0301

Dear Governor-Elect Cooper,

The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) is the largest nonprofit membership organization representing hospice and palliative care programs and professionals in the United States. The organization is committed to improving end-of-life care and expanding access to hospice care with the goal of profoundly enhancing quality of life for people dying in America and their loved ones. We strongly support efforts within the State of North Carolina to expand access to hospice and palliative care, especially to underserved communities.

Hospice is a holistic model of care for individuals at the end of life that focuses on comfort and palliation of symptoms instead of cure of disease. It is a cost-effective end-of-life care option that provides a high quality of life for dying patients and their loved ones. The goal of hospice is to provide nursing and medical care as well as spiritual and emotional support. Utilizing compassion and an interdisciplinary approach, hospice use decreases pain, improves patient and family satisfaction with care, decreases spiritual distress, offers enhanced bereavement services and, in some cases, prolongs life.

Unfortunately, there is a significant disparity in hospice utilization by African Americans compared to the larger Medicare population. For example:

- According to the Medicare Payment Advisory Committee (MedPAC), in 2014, 49.7 percent of white Medicare decedents utilized hospice, compared to only 37.5 percent of African American Medicare decedents.
- Only 7 percent of hospice patients are African American (NHPCO's 2015 Facts and Figures).
- A 2011 study found significant racial disparities regarding nursing home residents' use of hospital and hospice care at the end-of-life. Forty percent of African American nursing home residents are more likely to die in hospitals, compared to only 24 percent of white nursing home residents.
- African Americans experience higher rates of the three of the most common hospice diagnoses: cancer, heart disease and stroke.

Patients of African American descent should not be left to grapple with the tragedy of terminal illness without support. It is the NHPCO position that policymakers in North Carolina, and elsewhere, should ensure that current laws are not a deterrent to efforts by Hospice providers to increase access to all patient populations, with a special emphasis on increasing access for minority populations, and that they adopt

legislation that will provide greater knowledge and utilization of high quality end of life care for these populations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J. Donald Schumacher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "J".

Donald J. Schumacher  
President and CEO



Kaiser Foundation Hospital  
Walnut Creek Medical Center  
Hospice Program  
200 Muir Road  
Martinez, CA 94553

March 7, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Larry Varela, I am the Site Director for Kaiser Hospice in Martinez California. In my capacity as the Director of this Hospice program I have become acquainted with Continuum Care Hospice. Continuum Care Hospice is a Medicare certified hospice program and one of a select few that Kaiser contracts with to provide care for our beneficiaries.

Our experiences with Continuum have always been positive, and we are very comfortable referring our patients to them. We have come to expect excellent quality of care and care coordination from Continuum. From referral through admission the process at Continuum is professional and efficient. Feedback from patients and their families attest to a most caring staff and extraordinary dedication to the needs of the patients and their families.

We are confident that our patients receive outstanding physical, moral and emotional support in an environment where no effort is spared to alleviate pain and provide spiritual and emotional comfort. Please feel free to reach out to me at 925-229-7812 with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry Varela".

Larry Varela RN, MS  
Hospice Director