

COMMENT IN SUPPORT OF NEED DETERMINATION FOR
ONE FIXED MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING SCANNER IN
PASQUOTANK/CAMDEN/CURRITUCK/PERQUIMANS COUNTIES
IN THE PROPOSED 2022 NORTH CAROLINA STATE MEDICAL FACILITIES PLAN

July 28, 2021

To the North Carolina State Health Coordinating Council:

On behalf of Chesapeake Regional Healthcare (“Chesapeake”), I am grateful for the opportunity to provide this letter in support of the need determination in the Proposed 2022 State Medical Facilities Plan (“SMFP”) for one additional fixed Magnetic Resonance Imaging (“MRI”) Scanner in the Pasquotank/Camden/Currituck/Perquimans service area (the “Pasquotank Service Area”).

Chesapeake is a full-service regional healthcare system located in Chesapeake, Virginia. Chesapeake also provides primary care services in multiple locations throughout Eastern North Carolina, including Chesapeake Regional Primary Care- Currituck, Advanced Wound Care & Hyperbaric Center in Elizabeth City, Chesapeake Regional Breast Care in Elizabeth City, Chesapeake Regional Primary Care- Elizabeth City, and Chesapeake Regional Primary Care- Camden, among other locations. Each of these facilities is located in the Pasquotank Service Area. Thus, Chesapeake serves numerous patients in the Pasquotank Service Area community.

In Chesapeake’s experience, the residents of the Pasquotank Service Area are generally underserved and often lack access to necessary healthcare resources and choice of provider for many services. This low population area is considered to be a primarily rural, micropolitan statistical area. The entire Pasquotank Service Area is designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area (“HPSA”) by the North Carolina Office of Rural Health for primary care as shown in the attached Exhibit A. Currituck and Camden Counties are geographic HPSAs, indicating there is a provider shortage in the area or region and both Pasquotank and Perquimans are population HPSAs where there is a provider shortage for specific underserved populations. This services area is also designated as a HPSA for mental health and dental services. In other words, this area has too few primary care providers and other healthcare resources to serve its population. In fact, Currituck, Camden and Perquimans have a HPSA score of 14-16 and Pasquotank County has a score of 17+. The greater the HPSA score, the greater the need in a particular area with a need of 17+ being the highest score.

This chronic primary care shortage is the driving motivation for why Chesapeake has, in recent years, expanded its primary care service offerings into this area. MRI services are one such service where this area is deficient. At present, there is only one choice for patients needing to obtain an MRI scan in the entire four-county Pasquotank Service Area—Sentara Albemarle Medical Center (“Sentara”). Sentara offers both fixed and mobile MRI services but is the *only provider* that patients can use in that service area. Moreover, the MRI services offered by Sentara are hospital-based and therefore come at a higher cost to patients than the same lower cost services that can be provided through non-hospital-based facilities. As the Proposed 2022 SMFP recognizes, the Pasquotank Service Area requires an additional fixed MRI Scanner in order to meet the needs of its growing population.

Chesapeake agrees with and strongly supports including this fixed MRI Scanner need determination in the final 2022 SMFP for the Pasquotank Service Area. Including a need for an additional MRI Scanner within the four counties of the service area will provide the opportunity for enhanced competition by the introduction of a new provider, decreased cost and increased choice for patients in this rural community. It will help meet a need for imaging services and improve access to this medically underserved community.

Thank you for the opportunity to lend support to this proposed need determination and please reach out with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,


Reese Jackson
President & CEO