

## Heart’N Soul Hospice Special Need Petition

### Kevin Allison’s Speech

Thank you, David, and good afternoon members of the SHCC. I am Kevin Allison, a native of Charlotte/Mecklenburg County and COO of Heart’N Soul Hospice of the Carolinas. As David said, our petition seeks to provide improved access to hospice home care services for underserved minority residents of Mecklenburg County. The opportunity to establish a hospice agency that is made **by** and **for** minorities – the first of its kind in North Carolina – offers a chance to demonstrate the state’s commitment to ensuring equitable access to and quality of healthcare for all.

Having lived, studied and worked in the region for most of my life, I am aware of the existence of disparities in hospice care for minorities in Mecklenburg County. Throughout my career, I can have been reminded of the impact a person in leadership can make with representation and making a call based on knowing and experiencing a person’s culture. There is a difference between cultural competence and cultural awareness. We come from a place of cultural competence, having had these discussions with minorities who are *more* than patients; my aunts and my uncles, in-laws, family friends, and fellow church members to name a few. I believe I have given more healthcare guidance in a social

setting than I have in a medical setting. As I reflect now, it is because our audience are children of the civil rights era (act of '64) and are raised in the church. They depended on the words of a pastor over a provider for survival and stewardship. One may argue that health disparities in communities of color exist because of these times and have created a fragility in the reliance on life saving and treatment services.

If you are born and raised in the Carolinas, we are loving and sharing but we are also bias; not out of malice but heritage that we still fight to overcome regardless of race of ethnicity. We still judge quality and competence based on who's providing the services; this is an inherent bias that exist, yet we all see a shift in the younger generations, and we hope to adjust with it as well.

During our visits into the community, we were welcomed with a genuine air of relief that supported how Dave receives so many hugs, once we distinguished ourselves as owners and not marketers; we were reminded that our purpose speaks to an area of representation that in their eyes has not adjusted with the times, further supporting the statistics showing minority despair in hospice care.

We strive each and every day to make sure our patients and their families feel comfortable and cared for during some of the hardest days of their lives. We pride ourselves in comprising a team that is of the community

and realizing this is a valued resource for patients and families. We believe that this will ultimately help historically underserved communities become more aware of the options available to them for end-of-life care and more trusting of the medical professionals that are providing it.

As you will see, the data in our petition shows what we've experienced, that there is a need for a minority-focused agency in Mecklenburg County. We encourage you to assist in bringing greater diversity and inclusion to the Mecklenburg County hospice providers by approving for the 2024 SMFP our special need petition for one hospice home care agency in Mecklenburg County focused on serving historically underserved racial and ethnic minorities.

In closing, I ask what's needed to rebuild trust in our community? We may not be the complete solution, but we are a necessary connector for the county and state I know and love. I greatly appreciate your time today. We are available to respond to any questions you may have about our petition.

Thank you.