

Presentation of Special Needs Petition for PET/CT

Carteret County

Proposed 2024 State Medical Facilities Plan

July 20, 2023

Presented by: Julius Taylor, Vice Chair, Carteret Health Board of Directors

Introduction

Good afternoon. My name is Julius Taylor, and I am Vice Chair of the Carteret Health Care Board of Directors. I have been a member of the Board for 5 years and am a lifelong resident of Carteret County. I am also a cancer survivor.

I am here to add support for Carteret Health's request to include a **special need for a new shared PET scanner/ CT simulator in Carteret County and to reduce the performance standard for PET scans by half.**

Background

Since being appointed to the Board of Directors, I have had the opportunity to become aware of the dedicated and conscientious medical professionals our county is fortunate to have at Carteret Health Care. I have observed firsthand their work as both a board member and as a cancer patient and I believe this experience has afforded me a unique perspective of our local medical professionals. It has instilled in me a sense of deep responsibility for doing what I, as a board member, can do to assist these professionals in providing the best medical care for our citizens while always keeping in mind the fiscal restraints. I have concluded that our board should do all it can to provide these hard-working medical professionals with the tools they need, such as a PET/CT scan unit, to carry out their vital mission. These are some of the reasons why I strongly favor this petition.

Carteret Health has been providing quality care to Carteret and surrounding counties since 1967. The hospital is county owned and the Board of Directors is elected by residents. Carteret County borders the Atlantic Ocean; supports a major state port, research labs, marine industry, agriculture, and tourism. We

also support military families from the Cherry Point Marine Air station and Camp LeJeune. Our mission is “to provide Quality Healthcare with exceptional compassion and respect.” We are small enough for citizens to keep a close eye on what happens in the Carteret Health Care system, and they want quality at a fair price. Hospital revenue stays in the community to expand and support local services and we are fortunate to have an award-winning Cancer Center that is:

- Accredited by Commission on Cancer (CoC) of the American College of Surgeons since 2013.
- Recognized for Medical Oncology by the Quality Oncology Practice Initiative.
- Achieved recognition for Excellence in breast health as a Pink Ribbon Facility for 3D Breast Imaging.

Current Situation

This request is important to our Board and the community. The nearest fixed PET scanner in New Bern looks close on a map. It is not during the tourist peak season, when traffic jams Route 70 and the two-lane roads. A one-way trip from Morehead City can take more than an hour and from Down East – the eastern part of the two county peninsulas – agricultural and slow-moving farm equipment can double and triple travel times.

Carteret County has the coast and many remote rural areas connected by bridges. A few still lift and stop traffic to let the marine vessels through. Others just support winding 2-lane roads through a maze of waterways. Typically, these rural areas are home to some of the lower income communities that have only one vehicle. A trip from Beaufort, the County Seat, to New Bern can take 1.5 hours each way and a trip from Sea Level is 2+ hours each way.

Age is another unique feature in Carteret. While the State’s Median age is 39.8, Carteret County’s is 49 and going up, which puts Carteret in rare company. Age and cancer rates have a direct correlation, with cancer rates rising as people age. On the books, NCOSBM shows 69 thousand residents. On the street we know the population is much larger. Not yet included in official state projections, the County is experiencing new population growth following the Pandemic – with a surge of second homeowners now making Carteret County their new primary home. Though many try, no one has a good count of the

additional huge tourist population. We know they start arriving in March and stay until October, and we see the surge in the service industry, but they are elusive to count. They affect our cancer center because they can continue their treatments locally. They come to the coast for comfort or to be with family. Our retirement communities also mean more survivors who need retreatments.

As part of the State's transportation network development, Route 70, which connects the mountains to the coast, is becoming Interstate 42 in eastern North Carolina. That will mean a four-lane highway that can support more shipping and more military industry between Carteret and Craven County. We expect it will add another 25,000 residents in the next five years. So, traffic to New Bern will not get any easier, but demand for services will increase. Significant planned investments by private sector military companies will be part of that growth. Morehead City has one of the state's two deep water international shipping container ports. It will also get busier when the transportation improves.

Consistent with the past 5 years, The NC State Center for Health Statistics expects 1.3% annual growth in new cancer patients within our primary service area which translates to over 2,200 new cancer cases in Carteret, Craven and Onslow by 2028.

Conclusion

I know what it is like to arrange help traveling out of the county for tests when you are getting cancer treatment. It is exhausting and you are at the mercy of other people's schedules. I ask that you help us and approve our request for a special need determination for a shared fixed PET scanner/CT simulator in Carteret County. I will be submitting a formal petition in the required format later this month.