

Benjamin Sintay
North Carolina State Health Coordinating Council
Virtual Public Hearing
July 7th, 2025, 1:30 PM

Good afternoon. My name is Benjamin Sintay, and I am the Executive Director of Radiation Oncology and Chief Physicist at Cone Health, where I have worked for over 15 years. I am pleased to speak today about Cone Health's petition for an adjusted need determination in the 2026 State Medical Facilities Plan for one additional linear accelerator in Service Area 12, specifically designated for Guilford County. As outlined in our petition, this request includes the stipulation that it can only be approved for an existing provider of radiation therapy services that exceeds the LINAC methodology threshold of 6,750 by 10 percent, or 7,425 average ESTV procedures per LINAC.

In my role, I ensure we deliver quality radiation oncology therapy and maintain adequate capacity for cancer patients requiring radiation treatment. I have seen, firsthand, the exceptional quality of care that my colleagues at Cone Health have been able to provide to patients throughout our region. The Cone Health Cancer Center at Wesley Long represents one of North Carolina's premier providers of comprehensive oncology services and has been repeatedly recognized for its superior quality of care. Our cancer center is accredited by the American College

of Radiology and maintains a Quality Oncology Practice Initiative Certification from the American Society of Clinical Oncology. In 2017, Wesley Long was the first cancer center in North Carolina to receive Novalis Certification, a distinction that reflects our unwavering commitment to providing cancer services of the highest quality.

However, despite the high quality of care that we provide, Wesley Long faces significant capacity constraints that impact our ability to serve patients effectively. Our facility's need for additional LINAC capacity is clearly demonstrated by our consistently high utilization. In every State Medical Facilities Plan since 2018, Wesley Long has exceeded the methodology threshold of 6,750 ESTVs per LINAC. In the Proposed 2026 SMFP, data for FFY 2024 show that Wesley Long provided the fourth-highest total volume of ESTVs in the state with 31,476 procedures and the fifth-highest volume of ESTVs per LINAC, at 7,869 procedures. This utilization is 16.6 percent higher than the methodology threshold, creating an excess of 4,476 ESTV procedures across our four LINACs.

This challenging situation has been further exacerbated by operational difficulties. In April 2025, one of Wesley Long's four LINACs reached the end of its useful life and was taken offline for replacement. Due to the complicated replacement process, the new machine is not expected to

be operational until October 2025. Consequently, Wesley Long is currently operating with only three LINACs rather than the usual four, creating significant disruption of services and added stress for both our patients and providers.

I have seen and worked through many challenging cases that demonstrate the real impact of these capacity constraints. Our analysis shows that wait times at Wesley Long have increased dramatically, with the total average days between referral and treatment for all treatment types increasing from approximately 48 days in 2019 to 79 days in 2024. For patients battling cancer, this extended wait time represents significant added stress and anxiety during an already-challenging time. More practically, these delays can mean that a patient's cancer may continue to progress, and this is time that our patients do not have.

The situation is particularly challenging because Wesley Long serves as the primary provider of specialized stereotactic radiosurgery procedures in our region. Our facility accounts for 83.9 percent of the more than 1,000 stereotactic procedures performed in Guilford and Rockingham counties, reflecting our greater experience and expertise with these complex procedures. Patients seeking the highest quality care logically

prefer facilities with more extensive SRS experience, creating greater reliance on availability and capacity at our facility.

To offset our current capacity constraints, we have extended our operating hours from 8 hours to 12 hours daily. However, despite these extended service hours, our facility remains at capacity while facing the added challenge of redistributing high LINAC volumes across fewer units. This creates serious consequences for patients and their families, including treatment initiation delays and disrupted treatment schedules that may compromise optimal care timing.

In conclusion, we have chosen to file this adjusted need determination in consideration of our patients and the patients throughout Service Area 12. Our facility's exceptional quality, specialized expertise, and consistently high utilization demonstrate a clear need for additional LINAC capacity. Approval of an adjusted need determination for one linear accelerator in our service area would ensure that my colleagues at Cone Health can apply for a CON and thereby provide patients with the best, most accessible, and most convenient cancer care possible. Ultimately, making their cancer journey as manageable as it can be.

5 of 5

Thank you for your time this afternoon, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.