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State Health Coordinating Council (SHCC)
North Carolina Division of Health Service Regulation
Healthcare Planning and Certificate of Need Section
2704 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-2704

RE: UNC Hospitals Petition for an Adjusted Need Determination in Orange County

Dear Members of the SHCC,

I am writing to express my strong support for UNC Hospitals' petition to include an adjusted need determination in the *2026 State Medical Facilities Plan* for one additional heart-lung bypass machine in Orange County, designated for an academic medical center. As a cardiac surgeon currently performing surgical cases at UNC Medical Center, I can attest to the critical importance of having immediate access to heart-lung bypass support during complex cardiac procedures and also believe there is a clear and compelling need for this additional equipment to ensure the highest standards of patient safety and quality care.

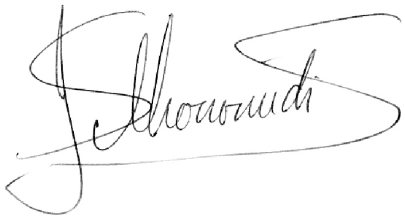
As stated in the petition, the current geographic separation of cardiac surgical cases has led to significant operational challenges. Our cardiac catheterization laboratories, where we perform transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR) and other structural heart interventions, are located in the main hospital building, while our open-heart surgery procedures are performed in the new surgical tower. TAVR, while less invasive than traditional open-heart surgery, still carries the potential for adverse events and unforeseen complications that could necessitate rapid conversion to extracorporeal support. To protect patients from these risks, UNC Medical Center safety protocols require heart-lung bypass equipment to be available on standby in case of an emergency. With cardiac procedure volumes growing, there are frequently times when all adult heart-lung bypass machines are in standby or active use, leaving no backup for emergencies. Even when a machine is available, it takes considerable time to manually relocate the equipment from one building to another; moreover, this process diverts staff away from patient activities and creates delays that could potentially impact health outcomes.

The acquisition of an additional adult heart-lung bypass machine would strengthen our ability to provide safe, high-quality cardiac care by eliminating the need for equipment transport between locations and ensuring on-site backup support for lifesaving procedures performed in the cardiac

catheterization laboratories. This equipment would serve as dedicated emergency coverage while maintaining our capacity for scheduled open-heart surgeries, thereby supporting both our clinical mission and our commitment to patient safety.

I appreciate UNC Hospitals' commitment to its patients as well as its willingness to support the physicians in improving the health of our patients. In an effort to enable me to focus on patient care, this letter will resemble those signed by my colleagues; however, that should not detract from the fact that I fully support UNC Hospitals' proposal.

Sincerely,



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