Buncombe County Board of Commissioners

Chair	*District 1*	*District 2*	*District 3*
Amanda Edwards	Al Whitesides	Martin Moore	Parker Sloan
	Jennifer Horton	Terri Wells	Drew Ball

July 15, 2025

The Honorable [LEGISLATOR NAME]
[TITLE - Representative/Senator]
North Carolina [House/Senate]
[ADDRESS]
Raleigh, NC [ZIP CODE]

Dear [Representative/Senator]

As the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners representing the residents of Buncombe County, we are writing to urge your support for continued state funding of the Healthy Opportunities Pilot (HOP) program in the 2025-2027 biennial budget. This innovative, first-in-the-nation program has proven its value to our community and deserves continued investment from the state.

Local Impact in Buncombe County

The HOP program has directly benefited Buncombe County residents as part of the 18-county Western North Carolina region served by Impact Health. Our local partners can keep offering vital services that address everyday factors, like housing, transportation, and food access, that affect people's health. Key Buncombe County organizations participating in HOP include:

- Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry (ABCCM)
- Bounty & Soul
- Eblen Charities
- Elida Homes
- Homeward Bound
- MANNA FoodBank
- Western North Carolina Community Health Services (WNCCHS)

Through Impact Health's network of over 60 human service organizations, HOP has delivered more than 280,000 services to eligible community members across Western North Carolina, with a significant portion benefiting Buncombe County residents. These services address housing instability, food insecurity, transportation barriers, and interpersonal safety concerns—all critical needs in our community.

Real Impact Stories from Our Community

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ABCCM, one of our key HOP partners, has served over 30,000 people in Buncombe County since 1956. Through HOP, they've been able to help families like Erica's—a mother who was separated from her teenage daughter due to housing instability. HOP housing navigation services helped reunite this family in time for Christmas, demonstrating the program's life-changing impact on our neighbors.

Demonstrated Return on Investment

The independent evaluation by UNC's Sheps Center demonstrates that HOP is saving money while improving health outcomes and significantly lowering emergency department utilization.

With total medicaid spend reduced by $1,020 per participant annually, this program is fiscally responsible and aligns with our shared goals of efficient government spending and improved constituent services. Impact Health has successfully helped network organizations invoice $13.2 million for pilot services while resolving more than $335,000 in disputed claims, proving the program's operational effectiveness.

Economic Benefits to Our Community

As you know, communities across North Carolina face ongoing economic challenges. The HOP program has provided a sustainable revenue stream for our local organizations, allowing them to expand services while contributing to our local economy, including the creation of more than 300 direct jobs in Western North Carolina, as well as supporting more than 400 farms. With a broader economic impact, HOP has invested $36M in local wages and supported nearly 900 jobs across a wide range of industries and service sections. Specifically, the total economic impact of the food program is $74M, comprising more than 500 jobs and $22M in labor income.

Eliminating this program would force these organizations to reduce services at a time when need remains high, particularly following Hurricane Helene. The disaster significantly increased demand for HOP services as families lost jobs, housing, and stability, making this program even more critical for our community's recovery.

Federal Partnership at Risk

The HOP program leverages significant federal matching funds through our approved Medicaid 1115 waiver. North Carolina has become a national model, with this program garnering attention from health policy leaders across the country. Eliminating state funding means losing these federal dollars and abandoning a program that has brought national recognition to North Carolina's innovative approach to healthcare.

Request for Action

We respectfully request that you:

1. Advocate for HOP funding during budget conference committee negotiations
2. Work with leadership in your chamber to prioritize this program
3. Consider the devastating impact on communities across Buncombe County and Western North Carolina if this program is eliminated

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4. Recognize that this program represents North Carolina leadership in innovative healthcare policy

Partnership Opportunity

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue with you further and arrange for you to meet with local HOP providers and participants to see firsthand the program's impact. Organizations like ABCCM, MANNA FoodBank, and Impact Health stand ready to provide additional information and support your advocacy efforts. Our county staff and community partners are prepared to share specific data and success stories from Buncombe County.

The residents of Buncombe County are counting on your leadership to preserve this vital program. Community members across Western North Carolina benefit from HOP services, and you have seen firsthand how social determinants affect health outcomes in our community. We hope we can count on your support to ensure HOP funding is included in the final state budget.

Thank you for your service to our state and your consideration of this critical issue.

Sincerely,
[SIGNATURE]
[PRINTED NAME]
County Commissioner
Buncombe County

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