

Memo

To: Buncombe County Commissioners

From: Sterling House

Date: February 2, 2016

Re: Buncombe County Community Funding request

Please find enclosed the following supplemental materials:

- Letter of support from Lisa-Gaye Hall, 28th JDB Administrator
- Letter of support from Donald Reuss, Smoky Mountain LME/MCO Director of Provider Operations
- Letter of support from Jeff Matkins, Insight Human Services Chief Operating Officer
- Letter of support from Hon. Alan Z. Thornburg, Senior Resident Superior Court Judge

28th Judicial District Bar

Buncombe County, NC



Post Office Box 7391
Asheville, NC 28802
Phone: 828.252.5733
www.28thJDB.com
Lisa-Gaye Hall, Bar Administrator

Brad Stark, President
Natalie Bacon, President-Elect
Annika Brock, Vice-President
Robert Carpenter, Treasurer
Dustin McIntee, Secretary

February 2, 2016

Buncombe County Board of Commissioners
200 College Street, Suite 326
Asheville, NC 28801

Dear Commissioners,

I have been honored to serve on the SOAR Court team for more than six years, and I have watched recovering alcoholics and addicts struggle to comply with the court's requirements of sobriety, treatment and good behavior. The disease of addiction is daunting for these mothers and fathers, and their very lives hang in the balance. In my observation, the difficulty of finding safe housing can mean the difference between a future as a productive citizen, or a downward spiral into jail, institutions or death.

Because I've been dismayed at this situation, I was excited when I heard about the availability of a six-bedroom duplex just off McDowell Street. After touring the house, and meeting with folks at Smoky Mountain LME, Insight Human Services and the county's compliance courts, it became obvious that this was a unique opportunity to provide safe, supervised, transitional living quarters for this vulnerable population while also saving money for our taxpayers.

Currently it costs at least \$160 a week to secure a bed in a privately-owned recovery residence in Buncombe County. If the county provides the requested funding for Sterling House, clients would pay \$100 a week, but only if they were employed and able to pay. The care coordinators at Smoky Mountain would provide support with gaining employment for the 12 women residents. Insight has agreed to oversee the program, hire and supervise a full-time coordinator, and provide therapeutic services to the residents.

North Carolina's mental health system has seen significant cuts in the past decade, resulting in a loss of 2 out of 3 state psychiatric hospital beds. Gaps in the mental health system result in people visiting the hospital emergency room, or ending up in the Buncombe County Detention Facility. Research has shown that 66% of the women in jail have an addiction. Buncombe County Department of Health and Human Services estimated (in 2014) that the annual cost for the "hard-to-house" in Buncombe County is \$2,300,000. Many of these "hard-to-house" citizens are the same folks that are failing in compliance court due to a lack of safe

housing! The Sterling House would reduce county costs by decreasing EMS transport costs, decreasing Sheriff transport costs to regional hospitals, and decreasing arrests.

National research shows the efficacy of sober housing in assisting individuals seeking recovery from active alcoholism and substance abuse:

- Residents of sober living houses show improvement at 6 month follow up in a variety of areas, including substance use, work, arrests and psychiatric symptoms.
- Participation in a recovery residence decreases inpatient treatment and post-treatment relapse rates and significantly increases recovery outcomes.
- Sober living houses can significantly improve the treatment outcomes of residents and reduce the risk of repeat criminal offenses.
- Sober living houses can provide economic benefit to the community by diverting high incarceration costs and by reducing barriers to employment for residents.

In my opinion, the Sterling House is an excellent way to address the County's Stepping Up Together goal of "implementing research-based approaches that advance the plan." This project brings together three of the community's committed stakeholders—the court system, Smoky Mountain LME/MCO, and Insight Human Services. They will work together to increase the County's capacity to house chronic mental health and hospital service users, at a significant savings to the public.

I hope you will give this project your most serious consideration. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Kind regards,



Lisa-Gaye Hall
Bar Administrator



44 Bonnie Lane
Sylva, NC 28779
828-586-5501

200 Ridgefield Court, Ste. 206
Asheville, NC 28806
828-225-2785

895 State Farm Road, Ste. 507
Boone, NC 28607
828-265-5315

825 Wilkesboro Blvd. SE
Lenoir, NC 28645
828-759-2160

January 20, 2016

Buncombe County Board of Commissioners
200 College Street, Suite 326
Asheville, NC 28801

Re: Sterling House
c/o 28th JDB
5 Sterling Roberts Way
Asheville, NC 28801

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is written in support of the Buncombe County Community Funding application submitted by the 28th District Superior Court, Drug Treatment Court, and the Family Treatment Court in Buncombe County. The request for funding for the Sterling House project is a collaborative effort of Smoky Mountain LME/MCO and Drug Treatment Court of Buncombe County.

Safe and sober housing is a critical component to bringing the most effective outcomes to rehabilitation and recovery from substance use disorders. It is within this structure that members can successfully manage the mandates of treatment, whereby safety, shelter, structure, support and community can significantly reduce the risk of relapse and enhance the trajectory of a stable and sustainable recovery process.

Smoky Mountain LME/MCO (Smoky) is a public managed care organization that oversees Medicaid, state and local funding for mental health, substance use, or intellectual/developmental disability services for Buncombe County as well as an additional 22 counties in Western North Carolina. Smoky also offers a comprehensive health plan for those individuals or families in need of mental health, substance use, or intellectual/developmental disability services. As such, Smoky is acutely aware of service gaps and needs for the individuals in Smoky's care. Smoky works diligently to form highly successful and collaborative partnerships to meet those needs within a cost effective and efficient manner.

There is a critical shortage for safe and sober housing within Smoky's Buncombe County catchment area. For that reason, Smoky has been in discussions with the Sterling House in regards to their project that will impact this deficit and provide measureable, sustainable, and positive outcomes to community enhancement goals. Those goals would include:

- Creating safe, low crime communities through the rehabilitation of criminal offenders.
- Economic benefit by diverting costly incarceration and reducing barriers to employment through stable housing.
- Improving treatment outcomes that enhance the rehabilitation process and reduce risk of repeat offenses.
- Re-integrating family systems through the successful rehabilitation of impaired caregivers.

Smoky Mountain LME/MCO is writing this letter in support of the efforts for funding the project by the Sterling House. The Sterling House has demonstrated their continued efforts through a significant funding contribution to bring viability to this much needed resource. Smoky is hopeful that the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners will join Smoky in this collaborative effort through support of this financial request.

Serving individuals with mental health, substance use or intellectual/developmental disability needs in Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey counties in North Carolina

Smoky Mountain LME/MCO



www.smokymountaincenter.com

Access to services: 1-800-849-6127

44 Bonnie Lane
Sylva, NC 28779
828-586-5501

200 Ridgefield Court, Ste. 206
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Lenoir, NC 28645
828-759-2160

If you would like additional information, please feel free to contact the Provider Relations Specialist who is working with Sterling House, Jeff Brooks at 828-225-2785 extension 5290 or Jeff.Brooks@smokymountaincenter.com

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald Reuss". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Donald Reuss, Director of Provider Operations
Smoky Mountain LME/MCO

cc: Sandee Resnick, DMH/DD/SAS
Stephanie Alexander Gilliam, DHSR, MH Licensure & Certification Section

Serving individuals with mental health, substance use or intellectual/developmental disability needs in Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey counties in North Carolina

665 West Fourth Street
Winston-Salem, NC 27101
Phone: 336.725.8389
Web: www.insightnc.org



January 21, 2016

Buncombe County Board of Commissioners
200 College Street, Suite 326
Asheville, NC 28801

Re: Sterling House
c/o 28th JDB
5 Sterling Roberts Way
Asheville, NC 28801

To Whom It May Concern:

Insight Human Services (Insight) is an accredited, nonprofit provider of a variety of treatment services in Buncombe County, NC. Insight greatly supports the efforts of the 28th District Superior Court, Drug Treatment Court, and the Family Treatment Court, and its application submitted to Buncombe County for community funding. Sterling House is a project that will improve the health and safety of Buncombe County through a collaborative effort of many partners.

Clinically appropriate sober housing is very effective in attaining positive outcomes for those in recovery. It helps assure the community of reduced the risk of relapse and less utilization of emergency services and criminal justice involvement. Studies have shown sober living residences create positive outcomes for in alcohol and drug use, arrests, psychiatric symptoms and employment.

Housing is a crucial issue in NC's tracking of Treatment Outcomes and Program Performance. At the same time, Research from DePaul University found that individuals who live in a "collaborative housing setting" have more success in recovery. Sterling Housing is exactly the kind of setting and service that will make for positive contributions to both individual lives and the community as a whole.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff R. Matkins", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jeff R. Matkins
Chief Operating Officer
jeff@insightnc.org

cc: Selbert M. Wood, President, Insight Human Services



State of North Carolina
General Court of Justice

Judicial District 28

BUNCOMBE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
ASHEVILLE, NC 28801-3584

ALAN Z. THORNBURG
SENIOR RESIDENT SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE

MARVIN P. POPE, JR.
RESIDENT SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE

Dear Commissioners and County Manager Greene,

I understand that county participation is sought in securing additional sober living housing.

While this proposal is not part of our Buncombe County Adult Drug Treatment Court, we do recognize the dearth of affordable housing in our community appropriate to meet the needs of individuals in recovery.

If the county approves this proposal, we will welcome additional housing options for drug court participants.

Sincerely

Tracie Bodford MSW LCSW LCAS

Tracie Bodford, MSW, LCSW, LCAS
Buncombe County Adult Drug Treatment Court Coordinator

Alan Z. Thornburg

Alan Z. Thornburg
Senior Resident Superior Court Judge