

Mecklenburg County Needs to Prepare for the Surge in COVID-19 Patients and Hospital Utilization
Action requested to ensure all residents can be cared for in Mecklenburg County

April 2, 2020

Dena R. Diorio
Mecklenburg County Manager
Charlotte Mecklenburg Government Center
600 East 4th Street
Charlotte, NC 28202

County Manager Diorio:

On behalf of Atrium Health and Novant Health, we would again like to thank you for your leadership during these unprecedented times. We especially appreciate the collaborative approach in working with the health systems to ensure Mecklenburg County is best prepared to combat coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and its effects on our people, our community, and our state.

As leaders of the largest health systems in this region, given the reality of this pandemic, we have proactively prepared for expected surges in COVID-19 hospital utilization. These efforts include rescheduling non-essential appointments and services, treating thousands more patients virtually, and playing a lead role in supporting the County and State's stay-at-home orders to mitigate the spread of the virus. Through these initiatives and others, we have created approximately 50 percent more internal capacity as we prepare to care for significantly more COVID-19 patients.

That said, while there are no perfect models, using the latest epidemiological statistical analysis to predict community spread, we are anticipating potential **additional volumes of approximately 3,000 hospitalized COVID-19 patients beyond our currently planned surge capacity**. In addition, our models suggest the surge will occur between mid-April and mid-May 2020. As seen in other cities across the nation, such a surge can quickly overwhelm hospitals, and a field hospital can act as an important relief valve. Therefore, the time to act is now to implement solutions needed to adequately care for our patients and community.

That is why we are requesting the County, in coordination with the State of North Carolina, take immediate action to provide the funding and resources required to establish a field hospital on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. We are very fortunate to have a community asset such as UNC Charlotte, which has a long history of not only serving the educational needs of our state, but also a long-standing commitment to the health and social needs of the greater Charlotte region. Repurposing and transforming the UNC Charlotte campus as a field hospital is yet another way we can come together to serve our community.

The extent of how fast COVID-19 will spread and how many beds we will need is directly dependent on how well our community observes the physical distancing and stay-at-home orders in place today. We continue to urge the community to do their part in flattening the curve. Without the cooperation of the public, the model we have today may change, and demand may exceed available capacity sooner than predicted – and possibly at even higher numbers. **Thus it continues to be vitally important for the community to observe stay-at-home and physical distancing orders.**

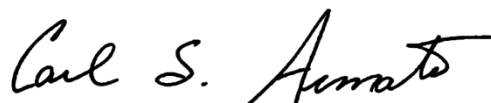
We recognize these unprecedented times can cause anxiety and hardship for the people who live and work in our community – but we believe that together, our community will rise to the occasion and come out of this crisis stronger and more united than ever.

Thank you for your ongoing support and courageous leadership.

Sincerely,



Eugene A. Woods
President and CEO
Atrium Health



Carl S. Armato
President and CEO
Novant Health