



Dear Green Mountain Care Board,

I write to offer the support of Northern Counties Health Care (NCHC) for OneCare Vermont's Calendar Year 2023 budget. NCHC is a federally qualified health center (FQHC) and a non-profit organization serving the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont with a rural network of five community health centers, two walk-in care centers, three dental practices, and a home care and hospice division. Northern Counties is a member of OneCare Vermont's provider network, and I serve as the FQHC representative on OneCare Vermont's Board of Managers and as a member of the Audit Committee and Finance Committee.

OneCare Vermont provides crucial financial support to NCHC focused on whole-person, patient-centered, preventative and coordinated care. Specifically, Northern Counties will receive over a half a million dollars in financial support this fiscal year, and that funding pays for care coordinators, community health workers, and community wellness staff. Any reduction in OneCare funding puts those staff at risk and reduces our ability to offer well-coordinated care. Health care organizations are facing myriad financial pressures, and a reduction in OneCare funding would be an additional headwind.

OneCare offers Northern Counties a venue to review population health data across multiple peer organizations in our health service areas. For example, OneCare data has offered us novel insight into how opening a new walk-in primary care clinic has affected Emergency Department utilization. Population health insights contribute substantially to improving operations and quality of care to meet our patient and community needs. This analytical work would be difficult without a partner.

Additionally, over the past year, health care organizations have experienced much uncertainty around the State's direction in health care reform, including the role of OneCare. If the Green Mountain Care Board fails to support OneCare in this budget cycle, or is ambiguous in its support, Northern Counties may reduce our reliance on OneCare as we seek more stable or certain options. This retrenchment would impact both our staffing levels and our level of engagement in Vermont's health care reform project.

Beyond supporting OneCare's 2023 budget, I would encourage the Green Mountain Care Board to take other actions to support OneCare's provider network. This includes (1) maximizing Medicare funding when applicable, (2) focusing on incremental improvements to the current model, and (3) limiting the administrative burden on Vermont's health care providers. The last point is critical. Right now, it is the most difficult time in memory to operate a health care organization. Vermont's health care organizations are stretched thin, and new administrative and regulatory tasks take staff away from daily operations, and can have a deleterious and demoralizing effect on our teams. Statewide health care reform should be in service of helping those teams navigate our current challenges.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Costa, Chief Executive Officer

Compassionate Care in Our Home or Yours

Caledonia Home Health
Care & Hospice

Danville
Health Center

Administrative Office
165 Sherman Drive
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819
802.748.9405 tel
802.748.4540 fax

Island Pond Health
& Dental Center

Orleans
Dental Center

Concord
Health Center

Hardwick Area
Health Center

Northern Counties
Dental Center

St. Johnsbury
Community Health Center

www.NCHCVT.org