

Ronald A. Paulus, MD
President and CEO



July 10, 2018

The Honorable Mimi Walters
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6115

RE: Mission Hospital's SANE Program

Dear Congresswoman Walters:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional information regarding Mission Hospital's Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) program, funded in part by the 340B Drug Pricing Program. A more detailed description of this program is attached.

We appreciate your allowing Mission Health to provide the Committee with additional information and to share our thoughts on key policy issues both now, and in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ronald A. Paulus".

Ronald A. Paulus, MD
President and Chief Executive Officer
Mission Health

cc: The Honorable Greg Walden, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce



STATEMENT OF
RONALD A. PAULUS, MD
PRESIDENT AND CEO
MISSION HEALTH
FOR THE
HOUSE ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE THE 340B DRUG PRICING PROGRAM
JULY 11, 2018

Mission Health truly appreciates the opportunity to provide a statement as part of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Subcommittee on Health's hearing entitled *Opportunities to Improve the 340B Drug Pricing Program*. As the House Energy and Commerce Committee continues to discuss the importance of the 340B Drug Pricing Program, we are pleased to provide additional information on Mission Hospital's SANE program.

It is important that I note that while Mission Health uses 340B savings to fund its SANE program, each community is understandably different and each hospital must make its own decision on whether this program is where those resources are best utilized taking into account current service availability from providers in the local community. However, at Mission Health we have found this program to be of vital importance to our community and a terrific use for 340B funds.



As brief background, Mission Health is a not-for-profit, integrated health system with six hospitals, numerous ambulatory sites, an employed Clinic of over 800 providers, one of the largest ACOs in the nation, and a \$100M+ post-acute provider. We provide services to 18 mostly rural, mountainous counties in western North Carolina, and our region's residents are older, poorer, sicker and less likely to be insured than state and national averages.

Through our 132 years of service to the region, we have had the same mission: *to improve the health of the citizens of western North Carolina and the surrounding region*. Mission Health lives this focus by providing, maintaining, and investing in access to high quality health, wellness and medical care services for all citizens of our region without regard to their ability to pay. We have established a national reputation for providing high quality, safe, effective and low cost care. As just one example, Mission has been named one of America's Top 15 Health Systems by IBM Watson Health in six of the past seven years (2012-2018). Mission Health is the only health system in the country to receive this recognition for four consecutive years, and the only health system in North Carolina to ever receive this recognition.

Understandably, questions have arisen about how covered entities use the savings generated from the 340B program. Mission Health, and likely most other health systems, share these savings to address our mission of serving low-income, underinsured and uninsured patients. Specifically, Mission Health uses its resources – even beyond those resources made available from 340B savings – to offer multiple Community Health Improvement programs and services, totaling approximately \$630 million from 2012-2017.



In 2017, Mission Health saved \$39.8 million through the 340B program - savings that have gone directly into critical programs that our community needs such as the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) program. Program detail, including training requirements and costs, about the SANE program follows.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE)

Mission Hospital employs 10 forensic nurse examiners that are specially trained, registered nurses who provide comprehensive care for victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and child, elder, and dependent-adult abuse and neglect, and other violent crimes. Forensic nurses are also involved in community outreach and educational programs designed to raise public awareness of sexual assault, safe relationships, and recognizing and dealing with intimate partner violence. These nurses are on duty 24/7/365, with a presence at the Mission Hospital Emergency Department and the Buncombe County Family Justice Center. They are also available as a resource for each Emergency Department in the Mission Health system. In 2017, operational costs of the SANE program totaled just over \$854,000.

A forensic nurse examiner encompasses not only sexual assault examinations, but also examinations for domestic violence and abuse victims. To function as a forensic nurse examiner, a registered nurse must attend a 40-hour didactic training course provided by an authorized program. In addition to the didactic training, there are 40-60 required hours of clinical training that must be completed. Once these requirements are met, the RN is authorized by the state of North Carolina to practice as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE). This training is above and beyond what is provided in a nursing program or in an emergency nursing orientation/residency. Not all of our



forensic nurses have an emergency nursing background, but many of our patients are first connected with our services via the emergency department. Additionally, these highly specialized nurses are able to obtain voluntary SANE-A or SANE-P (adult or pediatric, respectively) certification through the International Association of Forensic Nurses. Ongoing education and annual competencies are also required to maintain this specialty recognition.

On average, the 40-hour didactic training costs approximately \$450 per nurse. Clinical training is often not provided by the training institution and falls instead upon the responsibility of the nurse. At Mission, we've found that it takes approximately six months following the completion of the didactic training in a mentoring model in order for a new SANE to be ready to function independently as a forensic nurse examiner.

These nurses play a crucial role in serving victims in our community. Comprehensive care provided by forensic nurse examiners for our patients includes, when appropriate, forensic evidence collection, forensic photography, referral for ongoing care, and integration into community resources such as victim advocacy, law enforcement, and legal assistance. Our collaborative relationship with the Buncombe County Family Justice Center allows victims to seek care following an assault or domestic violence abuse with all of needed services available under one roof in a comfortable, safe, and non-threatening environment. Additionally, our SANEs can be called to testify for these cases as their expertise helps validate the evidence collected during the course of an exam.

Victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and abuse are a particularly vulnerable population, and at times, social stigma associated with these situations remains. It takes courage



for any victim to request assistance for these situations, and even more so to pursue justice. By providing these specially trained RNs, victims can be assured that all components of evidence collection are performed accurately, that they are receiving appropriate care, and that they have an advocate in their corner. Sexual assault, domestic violence, and abuse do not discriminate; they affect all races, genders, and age. Our forensic nurses provide care to any victim, regardless of their status or ability to pay. Our forensic nurses also believe in the importance of public education in the hopes of prevention, and they provide education to local schools, colleges, and other organizations.

Simply put, the ability to fund these forensic examiner nurses through our 340B savings is of great value to our patients and community.