



**NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**
Division of Health Service Regulation

JOSH STEIN • Governor
DEVPUTTA SANGVAI • Secretary
MARK PAYNE • Director

March 25, 2026

Congressman David Rouzer
2333 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Letter of Support for Mobile Health Consolidated Headquarters

I am writing to express my strong support for Novant Health Pender Medical Center's FY 2027 Community Project Funding Request. The proposal to develop a consolidated Mobile Health headquarters in Wilmington represents a critical investment in strengthening emergency care and response capabilities across southeastern North Carolina.

The Mobile Health team has a distinguished record of service, anchored by New Hanover EMS—which has provided 9-1-1 services since 1998—and the VitaLink critical care ground transport system, which has ensured timely access to specialized care for rural communities since 1991. Alongside the AirLink flight service, these programs form a highly coordinated and sophisticated lifesaving network serving New Hanover, Pender, Columbus, Brunswick, and Onslow counties. For example, these efforts have supported Pender Medical Center through the completion of 2,473 patient transports in the calendar year of 2025; which demonstrates both reliability and operational scale.

Beyond traditional emergency response, the organization continues to lead in innovative community health initiatives. As one of the first agencies in North Carolina to implement a Community Paramedic program, their team provides essential safety-net services, including care coordination for individuals experiencing behavioral health challenges and opioid use disorder.

My understanding is that the project will also include the co location of the southeastern State Medical Assistance Team (SMAT). The SMAT program provides critical medical surge capacity during disasters and public health emergencies. Co location of these resources will enhance coordination, readiness, and interoperability between local EMS and state response assets. For instance, both the Mobile Health team and the southeastern SMAT program aided Pender Medical Center in Burgaw during Hurricane Matthew, Hurricane Florence, HVAC system failure, patient monitoring system failure, the COVID Pandemic, numerous critical stress debriefings, and the June 2024 facility evacuation.

I fully endorse this project and believe it represents a meaningful and necessary investment in the safety, resilience, and health of southeastern North Carolina.

Sincerely,

Tom Mitchell, Chief
N.C. Office of EMS

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF HEALTH SERVICE REGULATION

OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

LOCATION: 1915 Health Services Way, Raleigh, NC 27607
MAILING ADDRESS: 2707 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2707
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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

Board of County Commissioners

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Brad George – Vice Chair
Brent Springer
Jerry Groves
Jimmy T. Tate E.D., D.



County Manager

Colby Sawyer
Assistant County Manager
Margaret "Meg" Blue
County Attorney
Carl W. "Trey" Thurman

March 25, 2026

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of Pender County, it is my genuine pleasure to offer strong support for the grant request submitted by the Southeastern Healthcare Preparedness Region (SHPR) State Medical Assistance Team (SMAT) and Novant Health Pender Medical Center's Mobile Integrated Health program to establish a consolidated headquarters facility serving southeastern North Carolina.

As Pender County Manager, and having spent the majority of my career in public safety and emergency management, I can speak with some authority on the value this coalition brings to our region. Southeastern North Carolina is no stranger to disaster. Hurricanes, flooding, tornadoes, wildfires, and hazardous materials incidents are not hypothetical risks for our communities, they are recurring realities. The coalition's ability to maintain a fleet of 26 mobile assets and more than 450 pallets of deployable supplies, and to sustain a 29-day deployment to western North Carolina during Hurricane Helene, reflects an operational readiness that our region depends on.

SHPR SMAT has been a strong partner for Pender County and Novant Health Pender Medical Center, the only hospital in Pender County. During both hurricanes Matthew and Florence, SHPR assisted in coordinating the evacuation of then Pender Memorial Hospital and assisted in establishing a medical aid station in Burgaw while Pender Memorial was repaired and operational. Pender Medical Center continues to receive the ongoing support of SHPR with Critical Incident Stress Debriefings for its staff following difficult incidents; and facility support during internal infrastructure failures.

A dedicated, consolidated headquarters would provide the stable foundation this team has long deserved. A purpose-built space for personnel, volunteers, vehicles, and equipment that must be ready at a moment's notice is a real need. The co-location of Novant Health's Mobile Integrated Health Team, including New Hanover County EMS, VitaLink, AirLink, Non-Emergency Transport, and Community Paramedics, further multiplies the value of this investment. Pender County has benefited directly from this partnership through support to Pender EMS, Fire, Public Health, our local hospital, and community events such as the North Carolina Blueberry Festival.

This is a sound investment in the long-term resilience of southeastern North Carolina, and I strongly encourage a favorable review of this request.

Board of County Commissioners

W. Randy Burton – Chair
Brad George – Vice Chair
Brent Springer
Jerry Groves
Jimmy T. Tate E.D., D.



County Manager

Colby Sawyer
Assistant County Manager
Margaret "Meg" Blue
County Attorney
Carl W. "Trey" Thurman

Please do not hesitate to reach out if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

Colby W. Sawyer

Colby W. Sawyer, MPA CEM

County Manager,

Pender County, North Carolina



Pender County Emergency Management

March 25, 2026

Congressman David Rouzer
2333 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Letter of Support for Mobile Health Consolidated Headquarters

To whom it may concern:

It is my pleasure to write this letter of support for the grant request from the Southeastern Healthcare Preparedness Region (SHPR) State Medical Assistance Team (SMAT) and Novant Health Mobile Integrated Health to develop a consolidated headquarters to serve southeastern North Carolina (and beyond).

The SHPR SMAT has been a strong partner directly supporting the Novant Health Pender Medical Center in Burgaw with the following incidents:

- Hurricane Matthew
- Hurricane Florence
- HVAC system failure
- Patient monitoring system failure
- COVID Pandemic, PPE and supplies
- Numerous Critical Stress Debriefings
- June 2024 facility evacuation

The Southeastern Healthcare Preparedness Region (SHPR) State Medical Assistance Team (SMAT) is a North Carolina Healthcare Preparedness Coalition (HPC) comprised of 198 healthcare and public safety partners and serves the counties of Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, New Hanover, Pender, and Robeson. Established in 2002 with federal funding, SHPR facilitates coordination and cooperation throughout the region to ensure partners have the capability to mitigate against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from events impacting healthcare delivery. Supporting the North Carolina State Medical Response System (NC SMRS), SHPR SMAT has responded both within North Carolina and the southern United States when requested for healthcare disaster support.

Given southeastern North Carolina's vulnerability to hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, wildfires, and hazardous materials releases, strengthening the coalition's headquarters for our team and volunteers and warehouse space to safely store our fleet and equipment, ensures effective disaster and medical response. SHPR maintains a fleet of 26 pieces of mobile equipment (trucks, trailers and generators), a warehouse of more than



Pender County Emergency Management

450 pallets of supplies and equipment ready for response to support critical healthcare infrastructure and services. Recent responses include first responder critical incident stress debriefings following significant incidents in southeastern North Carolina, multiple morgue surge events, the North Carolina Blueberry Festival, Lumbee Homecoming, and North Carolina Fourth of July Festival. The most recent response with the most equipment utilization was to western North Carolina for Hurricane Helene, with more than 29 days of deployed assets.

An added bonus will be the co-location of the Mobile Integrated Health Team (New Hanover County EMS, VitaLink, AirLink, Non-Emergency Transport, and Community Paramedics). In recent years, they have supported large community events like the upcoming North Carolina Blueberry Festival that will bring thousands of additional tourists to Burgaw. Additionally, they provide education, planning, preparedness exercises, and facility support to critical healthcare entities to include our local hospital, Pender EMS and Fire, Pender County Public Health and Pender County Emergency Management. I have had the privilege of serving in the past on the steering committee that helps guide the SHPR coalition.

If I can answer any questions or provide any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tommy Batson", written over a white background.

Tommy Batson
Director
Pender County Emergency Management

March 25, 2026

Congressman David Rouzer
2333 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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(910) 457-3800
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RE: Letter of Support for Mobile Health Consolidated Headquarters

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to express my support of the Community Project Funding request for the proposed Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) and regional State Medical Assistance Team (SMAT) headquarters project led by Novant Health Pender Medical Center.

Doshier Memorial Hospital is a Critical Access Hospital serving the residents of Brunswick County and surrounding coastal communities. As an independent, rural hospital, we provide essential frontline and emergency care, but we rely on strong regional partnerships to ensure our patients can access higher levels of care when needed. Timely, reliable transport and coordinated emergency response are fundamental to delivering safe, effective care in our area.

Novant Health's MIH and SMAT programs are indispensable components of our regional system. Whether facilitating rapid transfers of critically ill patients or supporting response efforts during hurricanes and other severe weather events, these teams extend the reach and capability of hospitals like ours. Establishing a centralized headquarters will improve coordination and deployment of these resources, resulting in faster response times and greater reliability when minutes matter most.

For coastal communities, disaster preparedness is a constant priority. The SMAT program plays a critical role in supporting evacuations, maintaining continuity of care, and ensuring healthcare facilities can operate during and after major storms. Strengthening this capability through a dedicated headquarters enhances regional resilience and ensures rural hospitals and their patients will not face these challenges alone. This investment will also strengthen the broader emergency response system by improving coordination, communication, and training across healthcare and public safety partners, resulting in faster care, smoother transitions, and better support for providers in both routine and high-impact situations.

The proposed MIH and SMAT headquarters is a critical investment in the infrastructure that rural and coastal hospitals depend on to serve their communities. I strongly support this project and its ability to enhance emergency services, strengthen regional coordination, and improve access to care for patients across North Carolina's 7th district.

Sincerely,



Lynda Stanley
CEO/President

J.A. Doshier Memorial Hospital