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**Coastal Horizons' President & CEO Reacts to New Hanover County Board of Commissioners' Vote on Heavily Debated Treatment Center**

WILMINGTON, NC. Today, the New Hanover County Commissioners voted 4 to 1 to direct County Manager Chris Coudriet to sign an agreement between the County and The Healing Place of Louisville, Kentucky to operate a new treatment center in Wilmington that will break ground this fall. In response, Coastal Horizons' President & CEO, Margaret Weller-Stargell, releases the following statement:

"Because of recent discussions, today's decision was not entirely surprising. This process has been flawed from the beginning. We were needed for a time, used for a time, and then dismissed when we spoke to the concerns for what we know are the (substance use disorder) issues in our very own community. We have no knowledge of the ability of The Healing Place of Louisville, Kentucky to successfully replicate and implement their model in a community that has data showing we are disproportionately impacted by the opioid epidemic. Coastal Horizons has implemented successful treatment models for 50 years, which is not solely medication assisted treatment. There is no question in the efficacy of Coastal Horizons as a treatment provider."

**Background:**

Trillium Health Resources conveyed approximately 9 acres of land they owned on Medical Center Drive to New Hanover County in 2018, for the purpose of constructing a men's substance use disorder treatment facility. Trillium and New Hanover County went before the Wilmington City Council in February 2019 to request a special use permit for this treatment facility. Coastal Horizons Center was asked to attend and present at this meeting in favor of the special use permit and was also asked to be presented as the intended operator, both by Trillium Health Resources and New Hanover County. The special use permit was approved, and Trillium then sent management from Coastal Horizons to visit The Healing Place in Louisville, Kentucky on March 31, 2019 through April 2, 2019. Management from Coastal Horizons met with management from The Healing Place and discussed two issues that were outside the fidelity model of The Healing Place: (1) the need for an expansion of the construction to include a facility for women,

and (2) the need to consider modifying The Healing Place model to include medication assisted treatment (due to the prevalence of the opioid epidemic in New Hanover County). The Healing Place later stated Coastal Horizons was not a good fit because: (1) The Healing Place indicated a men and women's facility could not co-exist on Medical Center Drive due to such close proximity (their men and women's facilities are miles apart from one another in Kentucky), and (2) medication assisted treatment could not be part of the peer run, abstinence only facility. At some later date, representatives from the County went to Louisville, Kentucky and returned with an acceptance and agreement that the property on Medical Center Drive would allow for a women's facility but would still not allow for medication assisted treatment. At no time was Coastal Horizons provided the opportunity to say they would operate a peer run, abstinence only facility. Rather, Trillium Health Resources made the decision to contract directly with The Healing Place in Louisville, Kentucky and while they advised New Hanover County of their decision, at no point did they ever advise Coastal Horizons they would no longer be the operator of this facility, as postured during the special use permit hearing.

As noted previously, Coastal Horizons was never presented the opportunity to indicate they would or would not operate a facility that did not allow for medication assisted treatment. Moreover, while it has been stated Coastal Horizons was not a good fit because they support medication assisted treatment, **it must be made clear that Coastal Horizons is not an organization that only provides medication assisted treatment.** This organization provides various treatment modalities and options for individuals in need of behavioral health and primary care. In fact, medication assisted treatment represents only 12% of Coastal Horizons' total operations. Coastal Horizons recognizes that our community has data showing New Hanover County is disproportionately impacted by the opioid epidemic. Replicating and implementing a model based in Kentucky is not necessarily consistent or conducive with implementing what is needed in our community.

Coastal Horizons, a nationally accredited organization through CARF, has been a substance use disorder provider in New Hanover County for 50 years and is considered a qualified, well respected organization, providing substance use and mental health services, among many other vitally important services to our community. Because of the reputation of this longstanding entity, Coastal Horizons was asked to be presented as the intended operator when going before the Wilmington City Council. As a result, the County and Trillium were successful in obtaining the special use permit but have since decided to move forward without Coastal Horizons being involved in this residential treatment facility.

Commissioner Rob Zapple seconded the motion to move forward with the agreement between New Hanover County and The Healing Place yet was the Commissioner who approached the President and CEO of Coastal Horizons back in December to advise her of his concerns Coastal Horizons was no longer involved in this process. In February 2020, he met with County Manager Chris Coudriet, Commissioner Jonathan Barfield, the President and CEO of Coastal Horizons, and the Vice President of Clinical Services for Coastal Horizons, and demonstrated his continued support of Coastal Horizons, stating further that he agreed the County should look for other land and create its own facility, suggesting consideration for property the County owns on Blue Clay Road.

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