



Marion County Board of County Commissioners

McPherson Governmental Campus

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District 1 - Craig Curry, Commissioner
District 2 - Kathy Bryant, Vice Chair
District 3 - Matt McClain, Commissioner
District 4 - Carl Zalak III, Commissioner
District 5 - Michelle Stone, Chair

August 6, 2024

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing on behalf of the Marion County Board of County Commissioners (Marion County) to express our strong support for the Estella Byrd Whitman Wellness and Community Resource Center (EBWCHC) in their request for funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for the HRSA-25-085 New Access Point (NAP) Grant.

Since opening its doors in 2018, EBWCHC has provided healthcare to more than 3,500 residents. As one of the only primary care providers located in the federally declared medical desert of the West Ocala (34475) community, the center delivers essential primary care services to residents who would otherwise lack access. The center addresses significant barriers such as transportation, lack of financial resources, and other socioeconomic disparities affecting many of the residents they serve.

While the center does not directly provide specialty care, it collaborates effectively with community partners to offer dental, behavioral health, career development, and other vital services. EBWCHC has successfully developed partnerships and participates in community collaboratives to meet the healthcare needs of Marion County's most vulnerable residents. With an estimated 40,000 of the county's residents living below the federal poverty level, access to affordable healthcare is crucial for achieving health equity for all residents.

Marion County considers EBWCHC's provision of affordable healthcare services to be invaluable to our community. EBWCHC is a highly regarded medical clinic, supported by dedicated board members, staff, and community stakeholders, all committed to continuously improving access to care and expanding patient services.

EBWCHC has the full support of Marion County in their pursuit of funding under the New Access Point (NAP) Grant.

Sincerely,

Michelle Stone,
Chair, District 5 Commissioner