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### **Doctors of Mecklenburg Medical Group Practice Sue Atrium Health to be Independent**

- *Doctors file with court following a lengthy effort to work constructively with Atrium Health (formerly Carolinas Healthcare)***
- *Being Independent from Atrium's overhead cost, doctors would be able to provide patients a better value***

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Today, Mecklenburg Multi-Specialty Group, PLLC, known in Charlotte as Mecklenburg Medical Group, filed documents with Mecklenburg County Superior Court seeking damages and a declaratory judgment to remedy Atrium's anti-competitive conduct in the region. The court filing also seeks to invalidate Atrium's employment restrictive covenants pertaining to doctors in the group.

Simultaneously, 92 of 104 doctors in the group filed to have the matter decided in the specialized North Carolina Business Court, where another anti-trust class action against Atrium is pending. Seeking this relief from the court is the first step in the medical group being able to serve patients independently of Atrium.

"The key reason our physicians want to operate independently is to allow doctors to spend more quality time with patients and provide them a greater value," said Dr. Dale Owen, the leader of Mecklenburg Multi-Specialty Group (MMG) effort and a cardiologist and former internist with Mecklenburg Medical Group. "Operating independently and removing Atrium's overhead costs will be a big plus for our patients.

"As consolidation has happened among hospitals and doctor practices in recent years, physicians are increasingly asked to spend less time one-on-one with patients and more time on bureaucratic activities that add little or no value to patients, Owen said.

"A great deal has changed over the past 25 years and the healthcare market continues to rapidly evolve," Owen said. "Today, bigger healthcare systems that can dictate prices and services across multi-county areas clearly have not brought lower costs to patients.

“Operating independently will also enable our physicians to offer patients competitive options from multiple healthcare providers, Owen said.

“It’s time to empower the doctor/patient relationship,” Owen added.

Mecklenburg Medical Group is the largest doctors practice operated by Atrium Health. The group was founded in 1936 and became a part of Carolinas Healthcare in 1993. In late 2016 and 2017, Atrium sought to dismantle the practice and spread doctors across their system. Atrium later attempted to force unreasonable new employment contracts on the group’s physicians that go beyond acceptable limits to protect legitimate business interests.

Specifically, the the doctors’ filing with Mecklenburg County District Court asks the court to:

- allow MMG doctors to operate independently
- prevent Atrium from interfering with such independent practice, its operations, finances, or affiliations
- prevent Atrium from terminating physicians during this transition as long as those physicians continue to adhere to all applicable professional standards
- force Atrium to stop certain anti-competitive practices
- allow the doctors to recover all monetary damages from the harm that Atrium imposes on the group’s doctors.

“As an independent medical practice, we will continue to send patients to Atrium for their in-hospital needs,” said Owen. “In fact, we expect there will be a significant number of cases when Atrium medical services can successfully compete in the marketplace and will be an excellent choice for our patient needs.”

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