

The doctor won't see you now

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As the fastest growing county in North Carolina, and one of the fastest-growing counties in America, Brunswick County faces significant growing pains, including the need for more medical professionals and more medical facilities. The two hospitals within our 847 square miles - Novant Healthcare and Doshier Memorial - cannot accommodate the surge of new residents, many of them senior citizens.

Folks moving here quickly discover that finding a primary care physician who's taking new patients is nearly impossible. With each local primary care doctor already caring for 1,500-2,000 patients, they really can't add more patients without compromising care or risking professional burnout.

Attracting more doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, and other medical staff is proving extremely difficult. While our beautiful coastal environment is attractive, salaries in Brunswick County are simply not competitive with those elsewhere. Doctors entering the profession carry over \$241,000 in medical school debt (not including any undergraduate student debt) that must be repaid.

Combine these factors with a shortage of affordable housing and school systems that are substandard by almost any measure (and facing a significant teacher shortage) and it's easy to see why doctors, especially those with young families, resist the efforts of hospital recruiters.

Our MAGA Republican legislators haven't got any bright ideas to address this crisis. To the contrary, they're enacting stricter abortion bans and outlawing transgender care for minors. Medical professionals don't need the government dictating what care they can provide or criminalizing medical choices made in often tragic situations.

We can't blame doctors for seeking greener or more welcoming pastures. We can and should blame our MAGA Republican legislators for making life significantly more difficult for doctors and patients. If they can't lead, let's elect folks who will. It's a matter of life and death.

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