



## Office of Representative Heath Shuler

Representing North Carolina's Eleventh Congressional District

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Rep. Shuler Announces Federal Appropriation for Western North Carolina Health Network** *Health Care IT System will Improve Patient Care Across the Region*

**Washington, D.C.** – Representative Heath Shuler announced today that he secured a federal appropriation of \$316,000 to implement the second phase of the Western North Carolina Health Network Data Link program in the Omnibus Appropriations bill that passed the House last night.

The WNC Health Network, which is comprised of hospitals and medical centers across the region, has achieved great success in linking the 16 independent Western North Carolina hospitals through Phase I of the project. This has allowed physicians and other authorized providers to access patient's admission data, lab results, medications, radiology reports, and other critical data.

Phase II of the project is designed to link other regional health care providers to the network. This will provide access to electronic clinical data from physician offices, health departments, freestanding clinics, and other health care providers through the WNC Data Link.

“The ability to send medical records electronically when a patient travels between hospitals and clinics will reduce duplicate tests and screenings, improving patient care and lower costs for everyone,” said Rep. Shuler. “Additionally, health care providers will be better equipped to safely care for patients by accessing the full medical history of their patients.”

Gary Bowers, executive director of the WNC Health Network was confident that the funding would benefit all of Western North Carolina. “This is a valuable project for the entire region that will improve patient care when it is fully implemented. When we first discussed this project with Congressman Shuler it was clear that he had a vision for what we were trying to do and offered his support. We sincerely appreciate his hard work in securing this funding,” Bowers said.

The Omnibus Appropriations bill passed the House of Representatives last night with bipartisan support. The Senate is expected to act on the legislation today.

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