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## WHA Applauds Initiatives Aimed at Bolstering Rural Health Care Workforce, Access and Quality

**MADISON (October 11, 2016)** ---- The Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) today applauded a package of health care proposals aimed at helping rural communities expand access to high-quality health care.

The Rural Wisconsin Initiative's health care component is a set of policies forwarded by members of the State Assembly that focus on addressing health care workforce shortages, improving health care quality and expanding access to wellness programs in rural Wisconsin.

More than 1.5 million people live in rural areas of Wisconsin. The initiative recognizes the importance of ensuring Wisconsin's rural residents have access to high-quality health care and wellness programs, while addressing the need for attracting and retaining an adequate workforce to deliver care in these regions.

"Many rural areas of Wisconsin are facing increasing challenges as they strive to deliver high-quality, accessible health care, including attracting and retaining highly skilled health care professionals," according to WHA President/CEO Eric Borgerding. "Health care is a key factor in economic development across the state, and is critically important for rural areas."

The proposals included in this package of legislation are aimed at accomplishing the following goals:

- Create more opportunities for advanced practice clinicians and physicians to train in rural Wisconsin and ultimately end up practicing in rural Wisconsin.
- Provide funding for rural health care and education training consortia to meet local and regional health care workforce needs with allied health professionals.
- Support rural hospitals in WHA's nationally-recognized quality improvement program.
- Bolster the use of health care workforce survey data to identify shortages in health care.
- Provide matching funds to rural communities interested in establishing wellness programs.

"Rural communities are a part of the cultural and economic fabric of Wisconsin, and we must take steps to strengthen rural infrastructures and economies," said Borgerding. "Studies consistently illustrate the critical importance of health care to all of Wisconsin, especially our rural communities, and we applaud this package of thoughtful initiatives."

"Good health care policy is bipartisan, and we look forward to working with Republicans and Democrats in the next legislative session to move these and other important health care initiatives forward," Borgerding added.

For more information on the Rural Wisconsin Initiative, visit: [www.ruralwisconsininitiative.com](http://www.ruralwisconsininitiative.com).