

## WISCONSIN HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION, INC.



To: Chair Schultz, and Members of the Senate Committee  
on Agriculture, Forestry, and Higher Education

From: Matthew Stanford, Vice President Policy & Regulatory Affairs  
Wisconsin Hospital Association.

Date: January 19, 2011

Re: Support for SB 375 relating to delaying the restrictions on participation by the University of Wisconsin System in selling or providing telecommunications services.

The Wisconsin Hospital Association supports Senate Bill 375 which would provide WiscNet, its members and others additional time to understand and plan for the separation of the University of Wisconsin System from WiscNet under the 2011-2013 Biennial Budget.

WiscNet's membership includes hospitals as well as over 400 other organizations, including the University of Wisconsin System. WiscNet, which is a non-profit cooperative association with its own bylaws and board of directors chosen by its membership, has served its hospital members well by providing high-capacity, affordable broadband internet access in areas of the state where such access was previously unavailable. In areas where some level of broadband is available, it remains cost-prohibitive for a lower quality, reliability and capacity connection.

For hospitals and health care providers, fast and accurate patient diagnosis is critical to providing high quality and safe patient care, especially in medical emergencies. These diagnoses often include the latest in digital scanning and imaging technologies that create large medical image files and require substantial bandwidth to transmit in a timely way.

WiscNet provides expanded access to fast, dependable and affordable transmission of these medical images from where they are taken to where they can be diagnosed for areas of the state where before, this transmission – and the improved health care it provides – simply was not available. Thus, hospitals have a substantial interest in ensuring that WiscNet can continue to provide such services into the future.

One critical step in planning for WiscNet's future is the legislative audit of the UW System's relationship with WiscNet required by the Budget Bill. However, it is our understanding that such audit will not be completed until January 1, 2013 – just six months before the date UW System must separate from WiscNet under the Budget Bill. By enacting Senate Bill 375 into law, WiscNet, its members, and others would have a more reasonable time frame to address the audit findings and best plan for a sustainable future for WiscNet and the broadband needs of its members.

Thank you.