

Wisconsin Hospital Association, Inc.



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WHA Responds to Governor's State-of-the-State Address

MADISON (January 17, 2006) ----- The Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) today released a statement singling out two initiatives included in Governor Doyle's State-of-the-State message as "promising approaches to improving access to health care services for vulnerable populations."

WHA cited the BADGER CARE PLUS proposal as an "important commitment to expanding coverage to uninsured children." That initiative suggests creating a single health care safety net program by merging the family Medicaid, BadgerCare and Healthy Start programs. Administrative savings combined with efficiencies associated with enrollment in HMOs are expected to finance an expansion of families eligible for coverage under the program up to 200% of the federal poverty level. "This is a creative approach to providing important coverage to vulnerable 'working poor' adults and kids," said WHA President Steve Brenton.

The HEALTHY WISCONSIN PROGRAM initiative was also cited by WHA as deserving of additional study and discussion. That plan would charge a group with exploring the creation of a reinsurance program for small businesses and individuals that would be designed to cover catastrophic health care costs. "There are many details to discuss before this initiative is ready for implementation, but the notion of looking at specific models already working in other states deserves our strong support," Brenton said.

WHA also strongly believes that a commitment to improving access to health care must include restoration of caps on non-economic medical malpractice damage awards and improvements in provider Medicaid payment, which currently rank among the lowest in the nation. "We must enable an environment where physicians want to practice in Wisconsin and where providers are adequately reimbursed for caring for medically indigent patients," said Brenton, who noted that cost shifting associated with inadequate payment has a significant impact on private health insurance premiums.

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