



Wisconsin Health and Hospital Association
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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Hospital Labor Shortage Requires Solutions, Not Red Tape

MADISON (January 30, 2002) - The shortage of skilled and professional labor in Wisconsin hospitals will move from serious to critical if legislation pending in Madison becomes law, according to the Wisconsin Health and Hospital Association (WHA).

"This is a problem that is screaming for a solution, not legislation that will certainly make it worse," said Eric Borgerding, WHA Vice President of Government Affairs. Borgerding was referring to union-backed legislation (AB 457 and SB 211) that would prohibit hospitals from using mandatory overtime except in cases of "unforeseeable emergency."

"We have a "foreseeable emergency" that this bill plain ignores – a growing shortage of nurses and other professionals to staff Wisconsin's hospitals," said Borgerding. "It's time to step up to the plate and craft real solutions to this problem."

Wisconsin Technical Colleges continue to have waiting lists in health care programs, especially nursing and radiology. The UW System is also turning away nursing students. Graduates from UW and Technical College programs have continued to decline in health occupations.

"This is textbook supply and demand," said Diane Peters, WHA Vice President for Workforce Development. "We have good paying jobs, and there are literally hundreds of future nurses, technicians and others who want them, but they simply can't get the education they need."

WHA plans to use the remainder of the 2002 legislative session to work on legislation that will streamline health education and make it easier for students to move through the system and into the workforce. "We are interested in win-win solutions that will be good for hospitals, nurses, and patients, and provide good paying jobs for Wisconsin's struggling economy," said Borgerding.

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