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TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Ways & Means

FROM: Ann Zenk, RN BSN MHA, Senior Vice President Workforce and Clinical Practice

DATE: March 16, 2023

RE: WHA Supports Assembly Bill 32

Wisconsin's health care workforce continues to grow, but it is not growing fast enough to keep pace with the demographic health challenges our state and the nation face. The U.S. is in the midst of a generational shift with momentous implications; the aging of the very large baby boom generation, the "Silver Tsunami, means that one in four Wisconsin citizens will be 65 years or older by 2032. For all industries, this means a shrinking available workforce. The challenge is compounded for health care because an aging population increases the demand for medical care.

Wisconsin hospitals are feeling the impact of the Silver Tsunami in waves of retirements and increasing demand. Hospital employment is growing in an attempt to keep pace. Wisconsin hospitals and health system employ more than 110,000 individuals, including physicians and advanced practice clinicians dedicated to providing psychiatric and mental health services. This number would be closer to 120,000 if the thousands of positions hospitals are recruiting for could be filled. In the last ten years, the number of registered nurses working in hospitals has increased by 2% annually.

WHA greatly values the partnership we have forged with the Wisconsin Legislature to grow our health care workforce. Foremost among these is the Graduate Medical Education grant program that has added 149 more residency slots to train new physicians each year, and the Rural Wisconsin Initiative training grant program that has added 46 additional programs to train advanced practice physicians, nurse practitioners, and allied health professionals, particularly in rural areas. But our work is far from over and other states are similarly realizing that recruiting health care workers from other states is one of the handful of tools available to immediately address workforce challenges.

Just last week, Michigan allocated an additional \$75 million towards health care provider recruitment, retention and training. This is on top of \$225 million that had already been appropriated, benefiting tens of thousands of health care workers who received retention bonuses or were successfully recruited to Michigan. We must continue to work alongside policymakers and focus on ways that make Wisconsin more competitive for our healthcare workforce.

Growing the health care workforce to sustain the high-quality health care Wisconsin citizens have become accustomed to and deserve is going to take concerted effort on multiple fronts, including attracting and retaining new providers and staff. The incentives in Assembly Bill 32 will provide an advantage for recruiting psychiatrists and mental health nurse practitioners from other states.

WHA requests your support of Assembly Bill 32.