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In BCRA Debate, Wisconsin Must Preserve Coverage, Demand Fairness

MADISON, WI (July 25, 2017) ---- As the Senate moves forward with the debate on the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA), Wisconsin Hospital Association President/CEO Eric Borgerding reiterated his organization's position that any proposal repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA) must ensure access to affordable care and treat Wisconsin's Medicaid program fairly.

"There are really two critical issues in play for Wisconsin—preserving Wisconsin's gains in insurance coverage and achieving fairness when it comes to the billions of dollars in federal funding for Medicaid," Borgerding said. "While the vote today was about proceeding with a debate, its outcome could actually penalize Wisconsin for the unique path we have chosen to expand health insurance coverage."

Wisconsin's uninsured rate has been cut nearly in half since 2014, due to a combination of income-based coverage subsidies on the Obamacare exchange and expanded Medicaid coverage for those below the federal poverty level. Both are components of Gov. Scott Walker's hybrid version of coverage expansion that has resulted in hundreds of thousands gaining coverage in Wisconsin. Yet, Wisconsin's version of Medicaid expansion didn't meet the Obamacare definition of "expansion." That means Wisconsin spends \$280 million per year in state tax dollars to cover the exact same population that the 31 expansion states will spend a fraction of that to cover under the latest version of legislation in the Senate.

"That's nearly a quarter billion annually in state dollars we could use to train more primary care doctors and nurses, improve access in underserved rural and urban areas or reduce Medicaid cost shifting to employers and families—*right here in Wisconsin*," Borgerding said.

The most recent version of the BCRA perpetuates Obamacare's legacy Medicaid funding inequities between states and continues penalizing Wisconsin for rejecting Obamacare, according to WHA. A study released this summer by six state hospital associations, including WHA, indicates states that opted out of the Obamacare's full expansion for Medicaid, including Wisconsin, will receive \$737 billion less in federal Medicaid funding over 10 years compared to those states that expanded Medicaid under the ACA. Wisconsin's share of that is estimated to be at least \$37 billion over 10 years.

"To be clear, we are not advocating for a redistribution of dollars from expansion states to nonexpansion states," Borgerding said. "We are calling on our elected officials to demand, and vote for, fairness for Wisconsin and provide our state with equal Medicaid funding for the expansion we did do. Because despite all the chaos in Washington right now, there is one thing out there that remains certain; if you are not asking, others are taking."

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