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WHA Praises Committee Action on Compact, Advance Directive Bills

The Wisconsin Hospital Association praised passage of two bills out of the Assembly Committee on Health this morning, both of which have strong WHA support:

Interstate Medical Licensure Compact (Assembly Bill 70)

Assembly Bill 70 eliminates a sunset clause in state law related to the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact (IMLC) that would have removed Wisconsin from the successful 29-state agreement. The IMLC allows physicians to apply for medical licenses in multiple states without having to resubmit the same basic information every time. Wisconsin was the first state to process a license through the IMLC process; physicians may still apply for an individual state license through the traditional method if they choose.

The bill has significant bipartisan support and is authored by State Assembly Reps. Nancy VanderMeer (R-Tomah) and Deb Kolste (D-Janesville) and State Sens. Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point) and Patty Schachtner (D-Somerset). The Committee passed the bill on a unanimous 12-0 vote. Its companion bill, Senate Bill 74, passed the full Senate in June.

Fulfilling a Patient's Advance Directive Wishes (Assembly Bill 287)

Assembly Bill 287 addresses a regulatory bottleneck on Wisconsin's health care workforce that is resulting in unnecessary delays in acting on a patient's advance directive wishes for treatment. The bill helps address these delays by recognizing the education and training of nurse practitioners and physician assistants to make the medical diagnoses necessary to activate the patient's written medical wishes. Under the bill a physician must still confirm the diagnosis.

The committee approved the bill 12-1. The companion bill, Senate Bill 254, is awaiting a hearing in the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services.

"One of the top issues facing Wisconsin hospitals and health systems is assuring an adequate health care workforce," said WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding. "The legislation passed out of committee today helps streamline Wisconsin's physician licensure process for many physicians wanting to practice in our great state. We very much appreciate the support from the legislature and the strong, bipartisan vote in committee. This legislation is a critical step, and there's more to do to make sure our in-state licensing processes are operating efficiently – including eliminating unnecessary delays so physicians that want to come to Wisconsin can start taking care of patients in Wisconsin as soon as possible.

"WHA's two-pronged workforce strategy continues to emphasize both growing the number of providers in Wisconsin and also better utilizing our existing workforce by modernizing rules and regulations," Borgerding said. "Today's action also removes outdated regulatory barriers that will allow hospitals and health systems to better utilize our advanced practice clinicians in Wisconsin and allow them to increasingly practice at the top of their licenses."