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State Budget, Price Transparency Covered at WHA's Public Policy Council Meeting

Future of Governor's Proposed Budget a Focus of State Advocacy Discussion

During the March 7 meeting of the WHA Public Policy Council, WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding and Senior Vice President of Government Relations Kyle O'Brien led a state-level advocacy discussion centered around the recently proposed Governor's budget, which includes an expansion of Medicaid to all individuals living up to 133% of the federal poverty level and reimbursement increases for hospitals and health care providers. According to the Evers Administration, the Governor's proposed budget uses an estimated \$320 million in state savings to invest in health care.

Borgerding discussed the political dynamics at play between Evers and the Republican-led Legislature and its impact on the future of Medicaid initiatives proposed as part of Governor Evers' budget.



WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding speaks at WHA's Public Policy Council meeting

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EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

Throughout 2019
Health Care Workforce Resilience
Free Member Webinar Series

March 15, 2019
Physician Leadership
Development Conference
Kohler, WI

April 17, 2019
Advocacy Day
Madison, WI

DHS Announces Grant Opportunities to Build Wisconsin's Health Care Workforce



High-quality health care depends on a high-quality workforce. In an effort to grow Wisconsin's health care workforce, the Department of Health Services is taking applications for WHA-crafted grants to expand training opportunities in rural areas and high-demand occupations.

- **Graduate Medical Education (GME) Grants**

This new round of funding will support several three-year grants up to \$750,000 for planning and implementing new GME programs in family medicine, general internal medicine, general surgery, pediatrics, and psychiatry.

Award: \$750,000 three-year grant

Due: by **noon on Thursday, April 18**

(See more grants on page 2)

- **[Advanced Practice Clinician \(APC\) Training Grant](#)**

APC grants are designed to expand clinical training opportunities for Physician Assistants and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses in rural Wisconsin to increase access to primary health care in rural areas.

Award: Max of \$50,000 for one year

Due: by **noon on Friday, April 26, 2019**

- **[Allied Health Professional \(AHP\) Education and Training Grant](#)**

AHP grants are designed to expand the availability of education and training programs for high-need, high-demand occupations, thus quickly supplying new qualified professionals.

Award: Max of \$125,000 per year

Due: by **noon on Friday, April 26, 2019**

REMINDER: PAC Breakfast, April 17

Contribute \$250 or more and attend campaign's kick-off breakfast immediately prior to Advocacy Day

The Wisconsin Hospitals State PAC & Conduit annual fundraising campaign kicks off in a few short weeks with the Wisconsin Hospitals PAC Breakfast held immediately prior to WHA's Advocacy Day on April 17. Everyone's support is needed to reach the aggressive goal of \$320,000 for 2019.

Individuals contributing \$250 or more to the Wisconsin Hospitals PAC or Conduit are invited to attend this special event. Make your 2019 contribution securely online at www.whconduit.com or call [Kari Hofer](#) at 608-268-1816. RSVP to [Nora Statsick](#).



Also, remember to register for Advocacy Day, health care's most important day in Madison. Bring a group; [register online](#).

Prepare for Advocacy Day, Download the HEAT Action Center App



Along with a new logo and text alert capabilities, the Hospitals Education Advocacy Team (HEAT) is proud to launch the HEAT Action Center App, making it easier for members to connect with their legislators and HEAT advocacy activities.

In the HEAT Action Center App, members will be able to search for legislators and send messages in just a few clicks. The app also allows members to register for HEAT events, like the upcoming webinar and D.C. Fly-in. Most importantly, members can respond to HEAT Action Alerts right through the app, making participation that much more convenient and quick.

"HEAT members will find the app tremendously useful for legislative meetings, especially for Advocacy Day," said Kari Hofer, WHA, Vice President, Advocacy. "All the information needed for attending legislative meetings will be in the app—office location, talking points, and who else is attending the meeting."

Over 1,000 health care advocates attend WHA's Advocacy Day, and 600 of them participate in legislative visits at the Capitol. The legislative visits provide an opportunity for members to discuss important health issues with their legislators face-to-face.

"The legislative visits at Advocacy Day are an extremely important and impactful form of advocacy," said Hofer. "We hope the app will aid advocates in their visits, but, ultimately, what matters is showing up—so legislators see all the people, their constituents, who care about hospitals and high-quality health care in Wisconsin."

WHA staff schedule all the visits in groups by legislator, so participants will attend the meeting with fellow constituents for both their assembly person and state senator.

Electronic materials will be available through the HEAT Action Center App, and Advocacy Day materials and resources will still be available in hard copy form at the event, as they have in the past.

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To download the HEAT Action Center App, follow these simple instructions:

1. Search for “votervoice” in your App store.
2. After you have downloaded the App, you will be prompted to enter your email address. A verification code will be sent to that email account.
3. After verifying your email, you will be brought to a ‘Find Association’ page. Start typing in ‘Wisconsin Hospital Association’ and an option for ‘Wisconsin Hospital Association’ will appear directly below where you were typing. Click or touch that full name and you’ll then have access to our new mobile app.

Remember to register for WHA’s Advocacy Day. [Event information and registration](#) are available online.

The Wisconsin Hospital Association Information Center (WHAIC) is the Trusted Source for Health Care Data!

Since 2003, our vision has been to help health care stakeholders in Wisconsin turn data into actionable insights that enable timely and reliable decision-making. As a wholly owned subsidiary of the Wisconsin Hospital Association, WHAIC has a strong heritage of meeting the ever-changing, broad-based needs of health care stakeholders statewide. From helping hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers submit data in compliance with state mandates—to providing data sets, tools, reports and analytic services to health care providers and patients—WHAIC remains committed to serving our customers and maximizing the value that can be realized from Wisconsin’s health care data.



The WHAIC team is dedicated, innovative and has the passion and expertise that a committed health care data program demands. We have years of experience helping health care stakeholders throughout Wisconsin meet their data and analytics challenges, and we continue to develop our products and services to meet the changing needs of our customers.

The WHA Information Center is dedicated to collecting, analyzing and disseminating complete, accurate and timely data and reports about charges, utilization, quality and efficiency provided by Wisconsin hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers and other health care providers.

WHAIC can help you:

- Quickly turn data into actionable insights for timely and reliable decision-making with our visualization tools, dashboards, reports and custom analytics.
- Leverage your existing data platform and analytics investment by providing our raw data sets in easy-to-use formats.
- Realize the benefits of a dedicated data program with tools and services that supplement your existing resources and infrastructure—even if you have none.
- Analyze data to evaluate health care services, patient populations, utilization, staffing, financial and market performance and much more!

For more information, contact WHAIC Vice President and Privacy Officer [Jennifer Mueller](#).

State Budget, Price Transparency Covered at WHA’s Public Policy Council Meeting . . . Continued from page 1

“Whether they are using the argument to support or oppose Medicaid expansion, lawmakers of both parties are agreeing that Wisconsin’s Medicaid reimbursement rates for hospitals negatively impact access for patients and drive up the cost of health care for our state’s employers,” said Borgerding. “As WHA has done every legislative session, we will continue to pursue an agenda with the Governor and the Legislature that finds bipartisan solutions to improve reimbursement, reduce cost-shifting, expand access and stabilize insurance markets in Wisconsin.”



So far in 2019, O’Brien reported that 10 WHA-initiated hospital roundtable meetings have taken place in state lawmakers’ districts to show how reimbursement is impacting the ability to expand access and reduce costs for patients.

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According to O'Brien, WHA will continue this broad "bottom-up" approach to advocacy, engaging Democrats and Republicans in the Legislature to support the Association's budget agenda.

WHA to Restart Transparency Task Force; Price Transparency, Surprise Billing Remain Federal Policy Issues

WHA Vice President of Public Policy Lisa Ellinger and Director of Federal and State Relations Jon Hoelter presented on WHA's internal work on price transparency and recent federal focus on "surprise billing."

Ellinger provided background on WHA's Transparency Task Force (TTF), which was created in 2015 to prepare WHA members for impending Affordable Care Act transparency requirements. The first objective of the TTF was creating tools and education on these new federal requirements, and the second was to analyze ways providers and payers could work together to improve the process for patients to understand their out-of-pocket costs for health care services. A subcommittee of the TTF, which included insurer representatives, developed a pilot project to identify challenges with creating price estimates, identify successful models, and share best practices. The TTF will again reconvene in 2019 to review the results of this pilot and prepare final recommendations.

Hoelter then provided an overview of how the concept of transparency in health care is translating to public policy debates in Congress, including last year's focus on prescription drug pricing transparency. While prescription drug pricing is expected to continue to be a hot topic in this new session, federal lawmakers are also starting to focus on surprise billing and hospital price transparency. Additionally, last year's inpatient rule requiring hospitals to post machine-readable chargemaster data online may be only the first step in a larger transparency initiative from CMS that could carry forward this year.

The Council also discussed how Wisconsin continues to lead the way in price and quality transparency, being the first state in the country to develop an online hospital price transparency tool that is now leased out to 10 states. Wisconsin's [PricePoint](#) website, operated by the Wisconsin Hospital Association Information Center, also provides patients with how-to videos and professional/ancillary fee cost estimates in addition to hospital prices.

Finally, Hoelter walked through the American Hospital Association's [guiding principles](#) on surprise billing, which were presented to a bipartisan group of Senators who had [asked for feedback](#) on how Congress might help reduce the occurrence of patients receiving "surprise bills." Hoelter and Ellinger invited the Council to pass along any ideas their hospitals and health systems may have as the Task Force reconvenes, and this topic progresses at the federal level.

If you have any questions, contact [Ellinger](#) or [Hoelter](#).

Wisconsin Health News' Tim Stumm Joins Public Policy Council as Guest Speaker

Tim Stumm, founding editor of Wisconsin Health News (WHN), joined the Council as a guest speaker to provide background on WHN and offer his observations on how Governor Evers and the Republican-led Legislature may find common ground on health care issues this legislative session.

Stumm launched the nonpartisan, online news service eight years ago to delve deeper into important health care issues impacting Wisconsin. In addition to its daily electronic publication, WHN hosts regular events with health care professionals and policymakers about issues that matter to Wisconsin's health care leaders—and WHA is a proud sponsor of key panel discussions, such as the annual CEO roundtable.

Stumm expects some issues in Wisconsin's upcoming budget session will have bipartisan support, such as dental therapy, increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates, and opioid proposals. Stumm also noted the significant differences that exist between legislative leaders and Governor Evers on Medicaid expansion, which remains one of the most hotly debated items included in Governor Evers' budget proposal.



Tim Stumm

Since 2018, Stumm has also covered Illinois health care issues through a similar news service to WHN called Health News Illinois. Stumm said an important difference between the two states is that health care leaders in Wisconsin are willing to work together, which is not always the case in Illinois. The Council also discussed the differences in health care policy issues that face hospital leaders and lawmakers in Illinois versus those in Wisconsin, including the state's liability environment for physicians.

"That trait of unity and support is evident among our members and the composition of our Board; we have small and large, rural and urban hospital leaders working together to address critical health care issues facing our state," said Eric Borgerding, WHA President and CEO. "Another big difference is Wisconsin's balanced medical liability system that allows us to attract physicians to our state, while also providing assurance to injured patients."

NOTE: Each hospital is eligible to receive up to two FREE subscriptions to the Wisconsin Health News daily newsletter as part of your benefits of being a WHA member. To take advantage of this free benefit, please contact [Tim Stumm](#). You can also contact WHA's Vice President of Communications [Stephanie Marquis](#) if you have any questions about this resource.

Reminder: Join WHA in D.C. April 7-10 for Congressional Fly-In

WHA will be in Washington, D.C. in less than a month for the upcoming American Hospital Association (AHA) Annual Meeting, April 7-10 at the Marriott Marquis.

In addition to the Annual AHA meeting, WHA hosts several Wisconsin-specific events, including a luncheon issues briefing, a members-only dinner, and WHA-scheduled Hill visits with Wisconsin's members of Congress.

WHA's issues luncheon and member dinner will be held Monday, April 8, followed by our Capitol Hill lobby day Tuesday, April 9. This event is an opportunity to share personal stories about how your hospital supports critical health care access needs in Wisconsin communities, and how federal health care policy impacts reimbursement and care delivery. WHA briefs attendees on issues and facilitates all Hill meetings on your behalf.

If you are interested in attending, you may register for WHA-hosted events by [clicking this link](#) or contacting WHA Director of Federal and State Relations [Jon Hoelter](#) for more information. A full schedule of all AHA events and registration information may be found on [AHA's website](#).