

WHA Urges Assembly Committee to Support Health Care Workforce Recruitment and Retention

Ways and Means Committee Chair encourages legislators to collaborate with WHA

Supporting urgent and sustainable efforts to grow Wisconsin's health care workforce was a key point in [testimony](#) provided by WHA Senior Vice President of Workforce and Clinical Practice Ann Zenk at the March 16, 2023 meeting of the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means as the committee considered Assembly Bill 32. This bill is aimed at creating an advantage for Wisconsin in the recruitment and retention of psychiatrists and mental health nurse practitioners in their initial years of practice in mental health professional shortage areas in the state.



WHA Senior Vice President of Workforce and Clinical Practice Ann Zenk testifies before the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means March 16, 2023 in support of urgent, sustainable efforts to grow Wisconsin's health care workforce.

In her testimony to the committee, Zenk noted, "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."

Zenk pointed to the success in growing Wisconsin's health care workforce already achieved in partnership with the Wisconsin Legislature. Wisconsin's Graduate Medical Education (GME) grant program, established through 2013 Act 20, and the Rural Wisconsin Initiative allied health and advanced practice clinician training grants established by 2017 Act 57, have forged public-private partnerships to create training pathways to grow Wisconsin's health care workforce faster. The GME grant program alone has created 149 additional Wisconsin GME residency positions and this training pathway is producing 54 additional new physicians for Wisconsin each year.

Zenk's testimony emphasized how much WHA values their partnerships formed with the Legislature, and the work that has been accomplished, but Zenk also said "There is more work to be done" noting, "All industries are facing the challenge of a shrinking available workforce as Wisconsin's population ages, but hospitals and health systems face an additional challenge in that as we age we need more health care, so demand is increasing as our workforce is shrinking."

Assembly Ways and Means Committee Chair Rep. John Macco (R-Ledgeview) offered appreciation and encouragement at the end of WHA's testimony: "Committee members, if there are ways you want to get involved in this process, please engage with the Wisconsin Hospital Association, because I think there are some really good constructive ideas here that could make this better."

Individuals who want to stay up to date on this and other important legislation as well as take action on those issues should contact WHA Vice President of External Relations [Kari Hofer](#) or join WHA's grassroots advocacy program, HEAT, at www.wha.org/actioncenter.

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