

WHA Workforce Council Focuses on Workforce Advocacy and on Recruitment and Retention Resources

The WHA Council on Workforce Development held their first meeting of 2024 on Jan. 26 with an agenda focused on recruitment and retention resources and on workforce advocacy.

A state and federal workforce advocacy update was provided by WHA Senior Vice President of Government Relations Kyle O'Brien and Vice President of State and Federal Relations Jon Hoelter. O'Brien and Hoelter briefed the council on legislation that would indirectly, but positively, impact the health care workforce by opening up additional psychiatric placement options for Medicaid patients by pursuing a waiver to a 1960s-era federal prohibition on [Medicaid reimbursement to certain standalone psychiatric facilities known as IMDs](#) and on legislation that would indirectly, but negatively, impact the workforce by adding unnecessary state transparency requirements that are redundant to and conflict with already existing federal requirements. O'Brien also highlighted the creation of a [Health Care Workforce Task Force](#) by Gov. Tony Evers.

Hoelter and O'Brien also discussed WHA advocacy on legislation and regulation that directly impacts the health care workforce, such as bills to update the ["Grow Our Own" GME training grant program](#), bills that would streamline licensure processes and federal [Health Professional Shortage Area re-determinations](#) that put student loan repayment and forgiveness programs at risk.

Katie Ott, a partner and director of voluntary benefits for WHA corporate member M3 Insurance, shared M3's expertise in an important recruitment and retention strategy—student loan repayment and forgiveness programs. Ott provided an update on the recent changes to federal laws governing employer-sponsored programs and on changes to federal repayment and forgiveness programs employers can help members of their workforce access.

WHA Council on Workforce Development members know that recruiting and retaining health care team members is essential but it has become more and more challenging to do so as the [Wisconsin population ages and the available workforce shrinks](#) even as an aging population increases the demand for health care. The health care workforce must grow faster, and a key strategy for doing that is to attract new entrants to health care fields. WHA Vice President of External Affairs Kari Hofer provided an update on the WHA health care career website and the digital media health care career promotion campaign aimed at middle and high school students and their adult influencers, which WHA and campaign sponsors will soon launch.

Rounding out the agenda, WHA Senior Vice President of Workforce and Clinical Practice Ann Zenk provided the council with a first look at the data and analysis that will be featured in the WHA 2024 Wisconsin Health Care Workforce Report, the 20th version of an [annual WHA report](#) that continues to provide the foundation for WHA's workforce advocacy.

Other Articles in this Issue

- [Governor Creates Health Care Workforce Task Force](#)
- [Grassroots Spotlight: Lt. Gov. Rodriguez Visits Hospitals as She Prepares to Chair State Task Force on Healthcare Workforce](#)
- [WHA Workforce Council Focuses on Workforce Advocacy and on Recruitment and Retention Resources](#)
- [Bellin and Gundersen Health System's Woleske Recognized with WHA 2023 Distinguished Service Award](#)
- [RSVP for the Wisconsin Hospitals State PAC & Conduit Kick-off Breakfast](#)