

Gov. Evers and WHA Board Discuss Current Challenges and Working Toward Solutions

Gov. Tony Evers joined the WHA board meeting on Dec. 15 at the WHA headquarters in Madison to provide remarks and engage in a discussion.



Gov. Tony Evers listens to WHA Board Chair-Elect and Ascension Wisconsin Chief Operating Officer Monica Hilt during WHA's Dec. 15 Board of Directors meeting.

Evers thanked the WHA board for its leadership during COVID and equated the state's work on vaccines administration, in partnership with hospitals, to saving 64,000 lives. He acknowledged that as a result of COVID, significant advancements were made in telehealth and behavioral health. Evers said that federal relief funds made it possible to invest in infrastructure and specifically called out support for Marshfield Medical Center - Park Falls.

"Park Falls serves a wide range of people from a lot of counties, and providing resources here improved access," said Evers.



WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding listens to Gov. Tony Evers address WHA board members at their Dec. 15 board meeting.

Looking ahead, Evers remarked on the work that needs to be done to help address the state's health care workforce shortage by "streamlining the certification process" and addressing the growing number of vacancies. Evers also recognized the current budget surplus and made a commitment to support health care heading into the next legislative session and the 2023-2025 state budget process.

"We have a lot of needs in the state, and I am more than willing to invest more in the health care system," said Evers. "Thank you for all your good work. There is no question in my mind that interaction with individual hospitals and WHA is one way we saved 64,000 lives in Wisconsin," Evers concluded.

After opening remarks, Evers engaged in a brief discussion with board members about various policy issues and the lingering effects of COVID, particularly workforce and financial challenges. The difficulty in discharging patients to post-acute settings is one area WHA board members described as exacerbating those challenges.

"There is a real problem with the placement of patients into skilled nursing facilities. Because of the workforce challenges, there is no easy solution. It is becoming much more critical and time-sensitive," said Ascension Wisconsin Chief Operating Officer and WHA Chair-Elect Monica Hilt. "We are here to partner with you, Governor, and we may need to think about the solution differently than we have in the past," Hilt continued.

Spooner Health CEO Mike Schafer reiterated frustrations with licensure delays. "We have someone willing to work, and then they can't work because they are waiting months for their license," Schafer said.

Evers reaffirmed his commitment to work in partnership with hospitals on solutions to these issues.

For the remainder of the meeting, WHA staff provided various updates to the board. Borgerding reported on the association's performance against its annual goals, highlighting key areas of achievement and ongoing projects that will continue into 2023. A copy of WHA's 2022 *Results*, the association's annual report, was distributed to the board.

Other staff updates included the launch of the [WHA - Wisconsin Healthcare Human Resources Association \(WisHHRA\) Salary Survey](#) from Senior Vice President of Workforce and Clinical Practice Ann Zenk, upcoming WHA educational programming for 2023 from Vice President of Education and Marketing Leigh Ann Larson, and new data tools provided through the WHA Information Center from Senior Vice President of Finance and Chief Operating Officer Brian Potter. Concluding the meeting, WHA's Government Relations staff discussed key policy priorities and advocacy strategies for the upcoming legislative session.

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