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WHA Urges Caution as DHS Embarks on Review of Wisconsin Trauma Designation Standards

Zenk accepts invitation to serve on DHS 118 Administrative Rule Advisory Committee

In Sept. 2015, Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker approved a Scope Statement allowing the Department of Health Services (DHS) to begin what proved to be a lengthy endeavor to update the rules that guide the state's process for hospitals that choose to pursue Level 3 and Level 4 Trauma Designation. The rules revision was completed in 2019 and the new Level 3 and 4 criteria were implemented in 2021. In July 2025, Gov. Tony Evers approved a State of Scope authorizing DHS to begin again the arduous process of revising DHS 118.

On Oct. 23, 2025, State Health Officer Paula Tran invited WHA Senior Vice President of Workforce and Clinical Practice Ann Zenk to serve on the new DHS 118 Advisory Committee. As Tran notes in her letter, "We depend upon the involvement of our stakeholders during the development of administrative rules so we can receive input from and collaborate with those who may be most directly affected by the proposed changes."

WHA and Zenk accepted the invitation to serve on the committee, welcoming the opportunity to refine the state's trauma designation rules to support participation, quality, continuous improvement and collaboration. In a letter to Ms. Tran this week, WHA urged caution, noting that the requirements that DHS ultimately adopted caused some hospitals to forgo trauma designation and that the regulations have made it difficult for hospitals to maintain their Level 3 and Level 4 designation status.

WHA's letter summed up this ask: "As future updates are considered, WHA and our members ask that DHS remember that impact on care, quality and access must be viewed not just through the lens of national recommendations, such as the American College of Surgeons 'Resources for the Optimal Care of the Injured Patient,' but also with a view to the benefit, burden and attainability for Wisconsin facilities and health care professionals providing care across the state."

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EDUCATION EVENTS

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Member Briefing: Wisconsin's Application for Rural Health Transformation Funding

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Caring for Wisconsin's Caregivers: Advancing Health Workforce Well-Being

Jan. 28, 2026

2026 WHA Health Care Leadership Academy