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WHA Expresses Concern with Trump Administration \$100K fees on H-1B Visas, Tariffs on Medical Supplies

On Oct. 17, WHA sent a letter to the Trump Administration expressing concern over potential new tariffs on medical supplies that could include everything from robotics, pacemakers, heart valves, surgical masks, IV bags, syringes and many more medical supplies that hospitals rely on to deliver both inpatient and outpatient medical care.

At issue is a proposal from the Trump Administration to use authority under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 to place tariffs on goods pending an investigation into the impact on national security.

"Given the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, and more recently, the Baxter IV plant shortage, WHA applauds the focus on our national security to ensure we are prepared for global supply-chain disruptions resulting from disease, weather, or political instability. However, we have significant concerns that immediate tariffs are not the best way to bring about the desired policy outcome," noted WHA President and CEO Kyle O'Brien in the letter.

WHA also included concerns that tariffs could drive up the cost of medical supplies at a time when health systems and the general public are already very concerned about the rising cost of health care, and that a large share of medical devices—as much as 70%—are manufactured overseas. One Wisconsin health system reported concerns that these new tariffs could increase costs by nearly \$150 million annually for their health system alone.

WHA also sent a letter to the Trump Administration on October 22 expressing concerns over a presidential proclamation by President Trump on September 19 that announced a new \$100,000 fee on new H-1B visas. The administration is concerned that while these visas were designed to bring in temporary workers to perform "additive, high-skilled functions," they are instead being deliberately exploited to replace rather than supplement U.S. workers.

According to guidance from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the fees would apply to all new H-1B visas filed after 12:01am EDT on Sept. 21, 2025 for people residing outside the U.S. without a valid visa. Importantly, the guidance appears to clarify that the new fees would not apply to:

- Existing valid H-1Bs
- H-1B renewals
- Anyone already in the U.S. seeking a change in immigration status to an H-1B (such as current J-1 Visas holders on a Conrad 30 waiver transitioning to an H-1B).

WHA expressed concerns that while Wisconsin is aligned with the Trump Administration in desiring to "grow our own" health care workforce right here in Wisconsin, there are simply not enough American-trained workers with the requisite skills to keep up with the demand for health care, despite the extensive efforts Wisconsin has undertaken to train new physicians. This includes a public-private partnership with state and federal matching grants that has created 193 medical residency slots and 86 new physicians every year, a public relations campaign called "So Many Options" that stresses the rewarding careers and upward job mobility in health care, and partnerships with private and public K-12 schools, technical colleges, four-year campuses and graduate programs to develop homegrown health care training and education programs that feed into the health care field in Wisconsin.

"Yet, despite all these efforts, Wisconsin still faces physician, nursing and allied health workforce shortages that must be bridged," said WHA President and CEO Kyle O'Brien in the letter. "These shortages are due largely to demographic factors beyond our control: the aging of our population as the immense baby boom generation reaches retirement age," he continued.

In fact, the letter pointed to Wisconsin Hospital Association Information Center data which shows that individuals aged 65 and older average 6 health care encounters to every 1 for those less than 45 years of age. Additionally, Wisconsin ranks as the 8th oldest state in the country in terms of the percentage of its population aged 65 and older and on Medicare.

"Wisconsin hospitals and health systems are using the H-1B visa waivers program as intended, to supplement and add to the labor market in a way that improves the delivery of health care and meets health care access needs in Wisconsin – not in a way that displaces

American workers," continued O'Brien in the letter. "On behalf of our members across the state, we respectfully request the Trump Administration provide a blanket-exception to this policy for health care providers," he concluded.

WHA is continuing to press these issues with Wisconsin's Congressional delegation. Contact WHA Vice President of Federal Affairs and Advocacy Jon Hoelter with questions.

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