

# A Message from the Chair of the WHA Council on Workforce Development



*Eilidh Pederson*

Never has workforce been so integral to ensuring healthy outcomes for those we serve. Ensuring talented and expert health care professionals are available is paramount to patient safety. The efforts to sustain our health care workforce are critical to the health and vitality of all Wisconsinites.

As an executive for a rural hospital, I have experienced firsthand how shrinking reimbursement, rising costs and continued workforce shortages can lead to service changes, and even hospital closures. As the chair of the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) Council on Workforce Development, I have had a front row seat in witnessing WHA's efforts around supporting, sustaining and growing the health care workforce. Their work and the work of the council is essential to performing our shared mission of meeting the health care needs of the communities we serve.

I have also been privileged to lead my organization to meet these challenges and expand needed services to the region. This response has required innovation and teamwork, and, at times, a leap-before-you-look approach to meeting the needs of the communities we serve. I've been inspired by the can-do attitude of the care teams and dedicated professionals serving Wisconsin. I also know that continued support and investment by our state leaders, our partners in education and hospitals and health systems, will be essential to sustaining and protecting our health care workforce into the future.

WHA has long been recognized as a leader in health care workforce analysis and advocacy. The 2025 Wisconsin Health Care Workforce Report marks the 21<sup>st</sup> year WHA has produced this annual report. Used to drive policy and enable hospitals to make crucial decisions around staffing and supporting "grow from within" initiatives, this report utilizes state and national studies, reports from experts and the experience of hospital leaders to provide important data and offer recommendations for action.

Health care is contending with an aging population and workplace challenges that put the industry at risk of a shrinking workforce. This paired with increasing health care needs, hospital bed shortages and nursing home bottlenecks is a recipe for disaster. This trifecta leads to delays in patient care and rising costs, compounded with reimbursement pressures.

Yet, due to the work of my hospital colleagues and WHA, I have hope for the future. A career in health care is one of the most rewarding and impactful service lines that exist. In my opinion, it is the greatest job in the world (outside of being a mom)! I am confident in my fellow health care leaders, along with Wisconsin's fine educational institutions and dedicated elected officials and policymakers, that we will take action based on WHA's workforce recommendations to grow and sustain the health care workforce needed to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

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