

**Vol. 69, Issue 27**

Thursday, July 3, 2025

## Press Release: WHA Applauds Bipartisan Budget for Hospitals

The Wisconsin Hospital Association released the following statement from President and CEO Kyle O'Brien praising the bipartisan budget agreement between legislative leaders and Gov. Evers that was signed into law on July 3, 2025:

"WHA is proud to have worked with the Governor and legislative leaders to craft a plan that provides unprecedented Medicaid rate support to hospitals in this state budget. This increased funding will help hospitals sustain and expand access to care for patients across Wisconsin when one-third of the state's hospitals are operating at a deficit, driven by \$1.6 billion in losses from Medicaid reimbursement.

"Wisconsin's hospitals are the cornerstone of our healthcare system and a safety net for Wisconsin families, with many services, like behavioral health and labor and delivery, provided at a loss. Many of these services simply wouldn't exist if it weren't for the commitment of hospitals and health systems.

"Hospitals must have sustainable funding if we expect them to maintain and expand critical services that communities need. We applaud the policymakers on both sides of the aisle who recognized this reality and supported a state budget that will provide significant investments in our hospital safety net."

A recent report from the Wisconsin Hospital Association found that 55 of the state's 167 hospitals were operating at a loss. A recent poll found that Wisconsin voters are overwhelmingly alarmed by hospital closures, especially in rural areas where the impacts of those closures have been felt the hardest.

O'Brien also commented on key reforms made to worker's compensation that were included in the deal, saying, "Under the budget bill, worker's compensation insurance carriers and self-funded employers would be given a different maximum rate of reimbursement for certain hospital services if they reimburse a hospital claim promptly. This timely payment reform to the worker's compensation system is something that hospitals have sought for years, as worker's compensation carriers are often the slowest to reimburse a hospital for care provided to injured workers."

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## WI State Budget Bill Includes Historic Medicaid Rate Increase for Hospitals

Early this morning, Governor Tony Evers signed into law the 2025-2027 biennial state budget, which includes the largest net increase in Medicaid reimbursement to hospitals ever enacted in Wisconsin via an expansion of our existing hospital assessment (state directed payment program/DPP). This occurred after a marathon legislative session between the state Assembly and Senate that ended shortly after midnight with support from Republicans and Democrats in both houses of the Legislature.

The State Legislature and Governor acted with urgency to beat a federal freeze on hospital taxes and directed payments included in the federal reconciliation package known as the One Big Beautiful Bill, which President Trump has been saying for months he intends to sign into law by the 4th of July.

WHA released a statement this morning applauding the Governor and the legislature for partnering with WHA to craft a budget proposal that provides unprecedented Medicaid rate increases to Wisconsin hospitals.

"Wisconsin's hospitals are the cornerstone of our healthcare system and a safety net for Wisconsin families, with many services, like behavioral health and labor and delivery, provided at a loss. Many of these services simply wouldn't exist if it weren't for the commitment of hospitals and health systems," said WHA President and CEO Kyle O'Brien in a statement. "Hospitals must have sustainable funding if we expect them to maintain and expand critical services that communities need. We applaud the policymakers on both sides of the aisle who recognized this reality and supported a state budget that will provide significant investments in our hospital safety net" he added.

As of press time, the U.S. House is expected to concur in the same legislation passed by the U.S. Senate on July 1, clearing the way for President Trump to act on July 4. By acting when it did, the State Legislature avoided a scenario WHA has been working to prevent for months: having Wisconsin's hospital tax of 1.8% (one of the lowest in the country) and corresponding federal Medicaid reimbursements it generates permanently frozen at a rate lower than most of the states in the country.

For more information about additional provisions included in the state biennial budget bill, read next week's edition of *The Valued Voice*.

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## **WHA Foundation Announces Eric Borgerding Health Care Advocacy Scholarship** **Honoring WHA CEO's legacy of leadership and impact**

In recognition of WHA President & CEO Eric Borgerding's retirement and 27 years of service to Wisconsin's hospitals, the WHA Foundation is proud to announce the creation of the Eric Borgerding Health Care Advocacy Scholarship. The scholarship will support the development of future health policy leaders while celebrating Eric's lasting contributions to advocacy on behalf of Wisconsin hospitals.



**ERIC BORGERDING**  
**HEALTH CARE ADVOCACY SCHOLARSHIP**  
*Honoring a Legacy of Leadership and Impact*

"It seems like not that long ago that I was given the opportunity as a UW-Madison undergrad to intern alongside of one of Wisconsin's premier lobbyists," said Borgerding. "Now nearly four decades later, I am truly honored to be a part of the next generation of Wisconsin health care advocates and am very grateful to those who have contributed the resources to make this possible. And best of all, it will be an opportunity right here at WHA. No better place to learn. Very exciting for all involved."

This new scholarship honors Eric's unwavering commitment to advancing public policies that have helped Wisconsin hospitals lead the nation in quality, access and innovation. Throughout his career, Eric championed countless initiatives that continue to shape the state's health care landscape—from restoring medical liability reforms to expanding Medicaid hospital funding and guiding WHA's leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Eric's legacy is one of bold advocacy and strategic leadership. This scholarship ensures that future leaders will be inspired and equipped to carry forward that same mission," said WHA Board Chair Dr. Jeff Bahr.

### **A Lasting Legacy for Future Advocates**

Each year, two students will participate in a 15-week WHA internship, gaining hands-on experience in health policy, regulatory affairs and advocacy. Following the internship, participants will present their work to the WHA Foundation and may be awarded up to \$5,000 each. The program aims to cultivate future leaders who share Eric's passion for improving health care through smart, effective policy.

The WHA Foundation has already raised more than \$230,000 to fund the program. The scholarship was formally announced by WHA Senior Vice President, Government Relations and incoming President and CEO Kyle O'Brien at Eric's retirement reception on June 19.

### **Thank You to Our Generous Contributors**

The WHA Foundation gratefully acknowledges the individuals and organizations whose generous contributions are bringing the Eric Borgerding Health Care Advocacy Scholarship to life. These gifts celebrate Eric's remarkable legacy and invest in the future of health care policy leadership in Wisconsin.

#### **Legacy Leader**

- Ascension Wisconsin
- Aspirus Health
- Emplify Health

#### **Visionary Advocate**

- Aurora Health Care
- HealthPartners – Amery, Hudson and Westfields Hospitals & Clinics
- Prairie Ridge Health
- UW Health

#### **Founding Contributor**

- Children's Wisconsin
- Diamond Boatwright
- Findorff
- Godfrey & Kahn
- Hospital Sisters Health System
- Husch Blackwell
- M3 Insurance
- Platform Communications
- Quarles
- RWHC Healthy Wisconsin Foundation
- SSM Health – Wisconsin
- Tomah Health
- UnityPoint Health – Meriter Hospital

### **Supporting Partner**

- CG Schmidt
- Cumberland Healthcare
- Door County Medical Center
- Edgerton Hospital & Health Services
- First Business Bank
- Health Policy Source
- Kyle & Laura O'Brien
- Reedsburg Area Medical Center
- Dan & Amy Rohrbach
- Schreiber GR Group
- Southwest Health
- Spooner Health
- Stoughton Health
- The Kammer Group
- The Richland Hospital & Clinics
- Upland Hills Health, Inc.

### **Friend of the Fund**

- Capitol Navigators
- Dr. Michael & Laurie Dolan
- Essentia Health
- Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin
- Rachel Roller

### **Join Us in Honoring Eric**

There is still time to support this meaningful tribute. Every gift helps grow the fund and expands opportunities for future health care advocates.

To make a contribution, visit our website or contact Kari Hofer, Vice President, External Affairs. Contributions from corporate or personal funds are welcome and are fully tax-deductible through the WHA Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization.

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## Wisconsin Hospitals State PAC & Conduit Campaign Nears Halfway Mark

The Wisconsin Hospitals State PAC & Conduit 2025 fundraising campaign continues to build momentum thanks to the generosity and leadership of hospital advocates across the state. To date, the campaign has raised \$154,880 from 99 individual contributors—that is 44% of the 2025 goal of raising \$350,000.

See the complete list of 2025 contributors below.

Participating in the political process is important to protect high-quality, high-value health care. The Wisconsin Hospitals State PAC and Conduit supports candidates who understand the important role Wisconsin hospitals and health systems play in the communities they serve, both as leaders in care delivery and as essential employers.

The fundraising campaign runs through the 2025 calendar year. Personal contributions can be submitted at any time online at [www.whconduit.com](http://www.whconduit.com) or through WHA Vice President of External Affairs Kari Hofer, who can be reached at 608-268-1816.



### Leaders Circle (\$7,500 - \$12,499)

Rathgaber, Scott	Gundersen Health System
Size, Tim	Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative

### Leaders Circle (\$5,000 - \$7,499)

Anderson, Sue	SSM Health - Wisconsin, Inc.
Bahr, Jeffrey	Advocate Health
Heywood, Matthew	Aspirus, Inc.
Jackson, Daniel	Ascension Wisconsin
O'Brien, Kyle	Wisconsin Hospital Association
Peri, Gil	Children's Wisconsin
Russell, John	Prairie Ridge Health
Woleske, Chris	Bellin Health
Woods, Eugene	Aurora Health Care

### Platinum Club (\$3,000 - \$4,999)

Andersen, LeAnne	Gundersen Health System
Chopra, Praveen	Gundersen Health System
Dalen-Bard, Jeffrey	Aurora Health Care
Franklin, Nathan	Gundersen Health System
Lewis, Caren	SSM Health - Wisconsin, Inc.
Natzke, Ryan	Marshfield Clinic Health System
Rohrbach, Dan	Southwest Health
Schafer, Michael	Spooner Health System
Schimmers, Heather	Gundersen Health System
Stanford, Matthew	Wisconsin Hospital Association
Timberlake, Karen	Children's Wisconsin
Van Meeteren, Robert	Reedsburg Area Medical Center
Wiegel, Molly	Wisconsin Hospital Association
Zenk, Ann	Wisconsin Hospital Association

### Gold Club (\$2,000 - \$2,999)

Bird, James	Beloit Health System (System)
Borgerding, Eric	Wisconsin Hospital Association
Erickson, Robert	Hospital Sisters Health System
Gutzeit, Michael	Children's Wisconsin - Milwaukee Hospital
Hartberg, David	Vernon Health



Hoelter, Jon	Wisconsin Hospital Association
Hofer, Karoline	Wisconsin Hospital Association
Larson, Leigh Ann	Wisconsin Hospital Association
Massey, Steven	Westfields Hospital
McCawley, Tom	Beloit Health System
McKevett, Timothy	Beloit Health System (System)
Miller, Thomas	Aurora BayCare Medical Center
Schulze, Connie	UW Health
Turner, Scott	Children's Wisconsin
Van Pelt, Ben	Aurora Health Care

#### **Gold Club (\$1,500 - \$1,999)**

Augsburger, Melissa	Edgerton Hospital and Health Services
Baenen, Sharla	Bellin Health
Bauer, Jessica	Aurora Medical Center in Washington County
Beirl, Luke	Tamarack Health Hayward Medical Center
Birschbach, Nancy	SSM Health St. Agnes Hospital
Curran-Meuli, Jane	SSM Health Monroe Clinic
Detterman, Lynn	ThedaCare
Dockendorf, Angela	River Falls Area Hospital
Gisi, Dale	ThedaCare Regional Medical Center - Appleton
Hanus, Andrew	Advocate Health
Jolley, Dennis	UW Health
McNally, Maureen	Froedtert & MCW - Froedtert Hospital
Nelson, James	Fort HealthCare
Nondorf, Kyle	SSM - St. Mary's Hospital Madison
Roesler, Bruce	The Richland Hospital, Inc.
Rudquist, Debra	Amery Hospital & Clinic
Shilling, Jennifer	Mayo Clinic Health System - La Crosse
Stephens, Brian	Door County Medical Center
Tesfasilassie, Dawit	SSM Health - Wisconsin, Inc.

#### **Contributors ranging from \$1,000 to \$1,499**

Bloch, Jodi	Children's Wisconsin
Capp, Alyson	Children's Wisconsin
Carter, Shane	Ascension NE Wisconsin - Mercy Campus
Hayden, Seth	Wisconsin Hospital Association
Levin, Jeremy	Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative
Massey, Steven	Westfields Hospital
Sprecher, Lon	

#### **Contributors ranging from \$500 - \$999**

Allen, Nadine	Wisconsin Hospital Association
Brabant, Chris	Stoughton Health Association
Bulin, Julie	Bellin Health Oconto Hospital
Chaloner, Robert	Marshfield Clinic Health System
Competente, Brian	WHA Information Center
Daly, Derek	Tomah Health
Franta, Amy	SSM Health - Wisconsin, Inc.
Holzhueter, Michael	Aspirus, Inc. Mayo Clinic Health System Red Cedar in
Horvath, Paul, MD	Menomonie
Ignatowski, Alex	SSM Health - Wisconsin, Inc.
Larson, Margaret	Ascension NE Wisconsin - Mercy Campus
Prise, Eric	Tomah Health
Roundy, Ann	Prairie Ridge Health
Sautebin, Michael	Marshfield Clinic Health System
Schattschneider, Tami	SSM Health St. Agnes Hospital
Selvick, Carl	Black River Memorial Hospital
Statsick, Nora	Wisconsin Hospital Association
Waldoch, Tim	Ascension Wisconsin

#### **Contributors ranging from \$0 - \$499**

Abey, Michelle	Stoughton Health
Ambord, Hannet	Reedsburg Area Medical Center
Borchert, Barry	Reedsburg Area Medical Center
Carter, Shane	Ascension NE Wisconsin - Mercy Campus
Dilley, Emily	Cumberland Healthcare
Drone, Kim	Wisconsin Hospital Association
	Froedtert & MCW-Froedtert Menomonee Falls
Dux, Larry	Hospital
Fleurette, Laurie	Wisconsin Hospital Association
Havens, Sarah	Gundersen Health System
Hermes, Amy	Stoughton Health
Lee, Don	Ascension Wisconsin
Mance, Jennifer	Children's Wisconsin - Milwaukee Hospital
McManmon, Kristin	Ascension Wisconsin
Micka, Michelle	Bellin and Gundersen Health System
Perez-Guerra, Frank	Gundersen Moundview Area Hospital and Clinics
Statz, Darrell	Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative
Williams, Janice	WHA Information Center
Young, Hannah	Prairie Ridge Health

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## Register Early for the 2026 WHA Health Care Leadership Academy

The time is now to register early for the 2026 WHA Health Care Leadership Academy. The program is already starting to fill up. Don't let this unique opportunity pass you by.

The 2026 WHA Health Care Leadership Academy focuses on the "business of health care" and is for clinician and non-clinician staff. It is targeted toward two groups of people within WHA member hospitals:

- Leadership staff who aspire to promote into the C-Suite
- Newer C-Suite leaders who want to continue to be promoted within the hospital

As with previous years, this program is available through the partnership between the Wisconsin School of Business Center for Professional & Executive Development (CPED) and WHA.

For more information on next year's program, including registration, [click here](#). Space is limited, so register today!

To view the program brochure, [click here](#).

For more information on the Health Care Leadership Academy, or any other WHA education, email [education@wha.org](mailto:education@wha.org).

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## Submit Your Nomination for the 2025 Global Vision Community Partnership Award

Does your hospital have a partnership with a community program that supports the health and well-being of those in your service area? Could this program benefit from unrestricted grant funding? If you answered yes to both of these questions, keep reading.



WHA Foundation is proud to once again offer the opportunity for WHA member hospitals to submit a nomination for the annual Global Vision Community Partnership Award.

**Nomination Deadline:** Friday, August 15, 2025

The Global Vision Community Partnership Award was established in 1993 by the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) Foundation. The Award's goal is to provide recognition, financial support and public awareness of a community health initiative or project, created in partnership with a WHA member, that successfully addresses a documented community health need. Partnerships must reach across the community or population served, and the program must be an active ongoing enterprise at the time of the nomination.

In addition to a plaque of recognition, the two winners also receive an unrestricted grant of \$2,500 each to continue to fulfill their work and mission.

To access this year's program description and nomination form flyer, [click here](#).

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