

## President's Message

A year ago in this report we highlighted an update to the WHA logo, including a new tagline that better describes today's WHA – **Advocate. Advance. Lead.** It's what WHA does for its member hospitals and health systems every day, and it's how this year-end report is organized.

WHA's biggest strength is our team, comprised of engaged and supportive members and a skilled and hard-working staff. The pages that follow highlight just some of WHA's accomplishments over the past year. I unequivocally believe that WHA's team is second-to-none, and the things we achieved in 2019, together, prove it.

Our core mission is to **Advocate** for hospitals and health systems, allowing our members to care for their communities and to fulfill their missions with as much support and as little hindrance as possible. It's been described as "getting the rocks out of the road," and WHA is dedicated to doing that heavy lifting – as well as preventing new rocks from blocking the way.

Strong support from and engagement with WHA members allows us to **Advance** a credible, research-based health policy agenda in both Madison and Washington, D.C. Our priorities often become lawmakers' priorities, because we are seen as nonpartisan and research-driven, backed by verifiable facts and data (WHA's frequent "#factsanddata" tag helps drive that point home). WHA doesn't just impact the health care debate in Wisconsin; we strive to define it.

Our track record of credible and impactful advocacy means WHA is increasingly counted on to **Lead** in a multitude of areas . . . *and that's exactly where we want to be.* It's an expectation we embrace with excitement and a strong sense of responsibility. Access to high-quality health care matters to everyone, and all of us at WHA want to help our members provide that care.

Advocate. Advance. Lead. We couldn't do it without our members, and we thank them for giving us the support to succeed and for the privilege of being their collective voice.



Eric Borgerding,  
President/CEO



Eric Borgerding,  
President/CEO, WHA

2019

## WHA ADVOCACY Rolls Up Big Wins in Madison and Washington

The most important piece of legislation in any state legislative session is the biennial budget. With the executive and legislative branches under different partisan control, maneuvering through the 2019-21 budget process was particularly delicate. With the help of WHA members, coupled with the skill and strategic insights of WHA’s veteran policy and advocacy teams, WHA effectively navigated the budget process and saw every one of its budget priorities signed into law.

### *A Successful 2019-21 State Biennial Budget*

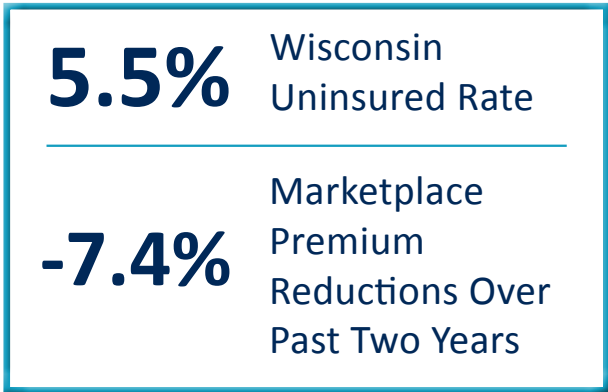
- **Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) Funding:** The budget included the largest DSH funding commitment since the program was first created, bringing total annual funding to \$117,000,000, including a 72% increase this year.
- **Rural Critical Care (RCC) Supplement Program:** Funding was increased from \$600,000/year to \$10.5 million/year for DSH ineligible rural hospitals. The provision also expanded the number of hospitals that can qualify for the RCC.
- **Behavioral Health:** Reimbursement under Medicaid for services provided by psychiatrists and advanced practice psychiatric nurses was increased by roughly 33%, another WHA-recommended, and access-expanding, payment improvement.
- **Telehealth:** The budget added provider-to-provider consultations and remote patient monitoring as reimbursable services under Medicaid.
- **Broadband Expansion:** Also critical for efficient telehealth services, the budget added \$44 million for broadband expansion in rural Wisconsin.
- **Graduate Medical Education (GME):** The budget approved WHA-proposed changes to the GME grant program that will train more in-demand specialty physicians who will stay and treat patients in Wisconsin.

### *Helping Get People Covered*

The state budget also included WHA-supported items aimed at improving Wisconsin’s already-impressive high rates of health insurance coverage.

- More than \$1 million was approved for outreach services to help connect the nearly 50,000 people currently eligible for Medicaid and 240,000 people eligible for subsidized Marketplace insurance with coverage.
- The budget also continued funding the Wisconsin Healthcare Stability Plan (WIHSP), which stabilizes high cost insurance claims on the ACA marketplace.

These changes helped reduce individual premiums by 7.4% over the last two years and also led to an increase in the number of insurers participating in the Marketplace. As a result, Wisconsin’s uninsured rate has remained relatively stable at 5.5%, still one of the lowest in the country and helping mitigate increases in hospital and health system uncompensated care.



## Other State Advocacy Priorities

While the biennial state budget is always the most important legislation, WHA kept very busy with a proactive, member-driven agenda and is once again racking up an impressive array of achievements so far this session.

- **Telemedicine:** A WHA-developed telehealth bill for Medicaid patients garnered broad bipartisan support in the state Legislature and was signed into law. With telehealth priorities established by WHA's Telemedicine Work Group, WHA staff worked closely with a bipartisan group of legislators to host an in-Capitol telehealth briefing – helping set a bipartisan tone that carried through to the November bill signing.



WHA's Telehealth Briefing at the State Capitol, July 18, 2019.



Governor Tony Evers signs the Telehealth Improvement Act on Nov. 25, 2019 at The Richland Hospital.



WHA VP of Workforce and Clinical Practice Ann Zenk testifies in the State Capitol alongside WHA members on Interstate Medical Licensure Compact legislation.

- **Health Care Workforce:** WHA remains Wisconsin's leading voice on health care workforce issues. WHA-backed legislation keeping Wisconsin in the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact – a 29-state pact allowing physicians to more rapidly obtain medical licenses in Wisconsin – was signed into law in November. WHA also successfully advocated to amend health care workforce safety legislation to protect all health care workers at risk for workplace violence.
- **Worker's Compensation:** WHA remains committed to protecting Wisconsin's model worker's compensation system, which provides injured workers ready access to high-quality care at relatively modest cost. WHA's advocacy leadership this session has resulted in worker's compensation legislation that did not include a controversial medical fee schedule.

## WHA Advocacy Helps Shape Federal Policy

While Wisconsin is not a large state, WHA's advocacy in Washington, D.C. outpunches our weight class.

WHA piled up frequent-flyer miles in its visits to Washington, D.C. throughout 2019. WHA participated in the rural fly-in in partnership with the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative in February, then led trips to D.C. in April, July and October. These U.S. Capitol visits were combined with in-district meetings and utilized WHA policy expertise to lobby key issues including:

- **Protecting the 340B program:** WHA successfully lobbied against PhRMA-backed reporting measures and supported successful litigation from the American Hospital Association (AHA) to reign in CMS on 340B.
- **Reversing Site-Neutral Payment Cuts:** WHA lobbying coupled with more successful litigation from AHA compelled CMS to reverse site-neutral payment reductions.
- **Price Transparency/Surprise Billing:** WHA engaged directly with CMS, AHA and Congress advocating for a sound and fair approach to protecting patients from surprise bills. Additionally, WHA's Transparency Task Force – reconvened throughout 2019 – helped bolster AHA's arguments in its lawsuit opposing overreaching elements of the CMS price transparency rule.
- **Stark Law:** WHA's strong support for reforming burdensome and outdated physician self-referral laws garnered support from Wisconsin's entire Congressional delegation, which sent a letter to CMS supporting WHA's position. CMS reacted favorably to many of WHA's reform ideas aimed at reducing physician and hospital regulatory burden and confusion.
- **Improving Federal Telehealth Law:** WHA information presented to Congress helped shape the CONNECT for Health Act of 2019, which would help remove Medicare telehealth payment restrictions.



WHA staff and members in Washington, D.C.



## WHA ADVANCES the Health Care Agenda

Developing sound health care policy is a long-term process, and WHA's efforts in this area are year-round. WHA regularly combines the policy and political knowledge of its veteran staff with the on-the-ground expertise of its members through task forces and work groups that develop WHA's proactive policy agenda. WHA also regularly publishes in-depth reports in areas of current and future priority, such as quality, workforce, uncompensated care and economic impact. This commitment to public policy development positions WHA to advance new ideas that improve Wisconsin's health care.

### *Proactive Task Forces and Work Groups*

#### **Behavioral Health Task Force**

The WHA Behavioral Health Task Force is finalizing a new set of public policy and educational recommendations that will guide WHA's behavioral health agenda over the next five years. Top priorities include outpatient mental health reimbursement, reducing state regulatory burdens, advocating for the development of regional psychiatric ERs/crisis stabilization facilities and facilitating greater standardization in the medical clearance process.

#### **Post-Acute Care Work Group**

Using survey data from WHA members, the WHA Information Center estimated almost 40,000 "avoidable days" occurred at Wisconsin hospitals in 2017. Armed with this information, the WHA Post-Acute Work Group met three times throughout 2019 to discuss findings from the survey and solutions to delayed discharges of complex patients.

WHA sponsored a second annual statewide post-acute conference in September with more than 150 individuals from hospitals, nursing homes, home health providers and others attending. Presenters from acute and post-acute



*WHA's Post-Acute Care Work Group meeting, April 19, 2019.*

settings addressed topics including guardianship, complex patient review committees, tracking avoidable hospital days, care transitions for complex patients and county-run nursing homes.

#### **Transparency Task Force**

WHA's Transparency Task Force was created in 2015 to help hospitals and health systems meet transparency requirements included in the Affordable Care Act. More recently, the group has taken on the issue of price transparency, engaging with and learning from member experts about ways to provide consumers with better estimates of their out-of-pocket costs for health care services. For example, many WHA members have created effective cost-estimator tools that can serve as models for others to put relevant information into the hands of patients.

The Transparency Task Force will soon issue a report with recommendations that allow those innovations to develop and flourish rather than stifle innovation through "one-size-fits-all" mandates. The Task Force also serves as a key member sounding board on other issues, including surprise billing and other state and federal legislation.

### *Wisconsin Healthcare Business Forum (WHBF)*



This partnership of WHA and the Wisconsin Technology Council (WTC) is fostering and promoting one of Wisconsin's most valuable assets: our high-quality, highly innovative health care sector. Bringing together hospitals, health systems, the business community and others allows better communications about health care challenges and needs.

ADVANCE.

Two exciting “reverse pitch” events took place in 2019, allowing health care leaders to highlight their technology needs to the health tech community. WHBF sponsored one such event at the annual WTC Tech Summit in March, and WHBF moderated a similar panel at the WTC Early State Symposium in November.

## Quality

WHA’s Quality Center leads the way in helping members increase health care value by improving quality and maximizing potential pay-for-performance incentives.



- WHA continues to be a key partner and leader in the Great Lakes Partners for Patients. Performance history across Michigan, Illinois and Wisconsin has allowed WHA to successfully bid for several extensions of the CMS Hospital Improvement Innovation Network (HIIN) contract during 2019. Several WHA departments contributed to Superior Health Quality Alliance leadership and work teams, with CMS awarding that Alliance its first task order: a five-year contact to promote patient safety in Wisconsin and across the region.
- During 2019 the WHA quality team provided onsite, virtual and workshop learning and collaboration events. WHA used performance data to identify topics to create statewide learning and networking events related to readmissions, health equity, antibiotic stewardship and other important areas.



WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding speaking at WHA’s Data Collection and Quality Reporting Conference in October 2019.

- Through its online services and Wisconsin Office of Rural Health contracts, WHA provided education and training to hospital leadership and staff for a wide variety of topics, including: Just Culture, ED Transfer Communications Improvement, Root Cause Analysis, Quality Essential Skills Training (QuEST) and High Reliability Organization consensus – a senior executive culture conversation.

## Physician Engagement

WHA offers educational, training and leadership development opportunities for physicians at our member hospital and health systems. More than 200 attendees gathered at the 14th annual WHA Physician Leadership Development Conference in Kohler, WI. This year’s program offered two development tracks: one for emerging physician leaders and one for senior-level physician leaders.



Keynote Speaker Stephen Beeson, MD, presents to the large crowd at WHA’s Physician Leadership Conference March 15, 2019.

## WHA's 2019 Advocacy Day: "You have an army." - State Rep. Evan Goyke

WHA's 2019 Advocacy Day was a tremendous success, with nearly 1,000 attendees enjoying what feedback showed to be a vibrant array of compelling programming. Former Gov. Tommy G. Thompson's conversation with WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding captured everyone's attention, revealing how WHA's work has been held in such high esteem from one of Wisconsin's legendary elected officials. Governor Tony Evers gave the keynote address, focusing his comments on the proposed state budget and investments in health care for Wisconsin.



*The crowd at WHA's 2019 Advocacy Day.*

The session also included one of the most substantive bipartisan legislative dialogues in Advocacy Day history during the legislative panel. The crowd also had the opportunity to recognize State Sen. Janis Ringhand (D-Evansville) as 2019 Health Care Advocate of the Year and Reedsburg Area Medical Center as the 2019 Advocacy All-Star Award winner. Advocacy Day attendees spent the afternoon visiting 130 of 132 state legislators in the State Capitol.

### *Hospitals Education & Advocacy Team (HEAT)*

- The Hospitals Education & Advocacy Team (HEAT) added new grassroots resources and revamped its logo and action center on the WHA website. HEAT also established a mobile app enabling mobile access to the Action Center and alerts – as well as Advocacy Day resources such as legislative meeting information. HEAT alerts now utilize text messaging and push notifications.
- HEAT added 230 new members in 2019, increasing membership to 2,630. Using its electronic alerts, customized alerts and other communication vehicles, HEAT spurred 5,382 contacts to legislative offices in 2019. In-person meetings also continue to be a HEAT strength, with 21 separate HEAT Roundtables held with elected officials around Wisconsin.



### *Wisconsin Hospitals PAC and Conduit*

In 2019, the Wisconsin Hospitals PAC and Conduit set a new fundraising record and remains one of the top dispersing conduits in Wisconsin, supporting both Democrats and Republicans who support sound health care policy.

- ✓ **Raised** over \$320,000 to support political candidates who value community hospitals and health systems.
- ✓ **Disbursed** over \$190,000 to state and federal candidates in Wisconsin.
- ✓ **Hosted** 13 candidate events.



ADVANCE.

## WHA LEADS by Translating Information into Action

Because of its fact-based, nonpartisan research and reports, WHA is one of the most trusted voices in Wisconsin health care – so much so that WHA’s health care policy proposals receive strong bipartisan support in an otherwise hyperpartisan political climate. WHA is looked to for leadership on proposals that unify.

### Reports

#### Wisconsin 2019 Health Care Workforce Report

Released in early December, the 2019 Health Care Workforce Report combines data from multiple sources and expert analysis to thoroughly dissect the workforce challenges facing Wisconsin hospitals and health systems. The report analyzes demographic, employment and regulatory trends in Wisconsin to recommend public policy solutions that will help address the health care needs of the coming “silver tsunami.”

#### Guide to Wisconsin Hospitals, Health Care Data & Uncompensated Care Reports

These annual reports highlight fundamental information: The *Guide* shows detailed data about each hospital in Wisconsin, including selected measures of utilization, service, staffing and finance. The *Health Care Data Report* provides a summary of utilization and charges from Wisconsin hospitals and free-standing ambulatory surgery centers. Hospitals’ experience with charity care and bad debt is summarized in the *Uncompensated Care Report*.

#### 2019 Healthy Hospitals. Healthy Communities

Released in December, the 2019 Economic Impact Report examines how Wisconsin’s hospitals and health systems have a dramatic impact on the state and local economies. Often the anchor of many Wisconsin communities, hospitals and health systems rank among the state’s largest employers and strongest economic drivers.

#### 2018 Quality Report

This annual report features important examples of how Wisconsin’s health care entities are evolving health care quality from within. New sources of data and technology are identifying opportunities to provide high-quality care to more diverse populations. The quality report also articulates many examples of how health care providers create and strengthen partnerships beyond the boundaries of inpatient care.

#### 2019 Community Benefits Report

Sharing examples of how Wisconsin hospitals and health systems impact their local communities in many ways outside of the hospital’s walls, the community benefits report is an annual snapshot of the tremendous efforts taking place in every corner of the state. Simply put, Wisconsin’s hospitals and health systems are our state’s health care safety net.

### WHA Information Center

The WHA Information Center continued in 2019 to build upon its status as one of the state’s leading sources for health care data.



- In October the WHAIC was notified that it has met the initial requirements to become a Certified Qualified Entity (CQE) under CMS’ Qualified Entity Certification Program – the only hospital association in the country to merit such a designation. The CMS CQE program enables organizations to receive Medicare Parts A and B medical claims data and Part D prescription drug claims data for use in evaluating provider performance. WHAIC now moves on to Phase 2 of the qualification, which should last into the first half of 2020.
- In a major upgrade to the WHA Charge Analyzer, member hospitals now have even more options for “drilling down” into their data with the addition of race and ethnicity data sets.
- WHAIC saw impressive turnout at its first-ever statewide Data Collection/Quality Reporting conference in October, with more than 200 hospital and ambulatory surgery center staff from around the state attending.