

---

**From:** WHA Communications  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 3, 2020 4:21 PM  
**Subject:** WHA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Preparation and Response Efforts



Good afternoon Members of the Wisconsin Legislature,

As you know, concerns about the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) are increasing globally, nationally, and here in Wisconsin. I want to update you on the Wisconsin Hospital Association's preparations and response efforts.

**Current status:**

The most recent (February 29, 2020) **CDC update** continues to note that although the risk to the U.S. population is currently assessed as low (the WI DHS notes the same for Wisconsin citizens), "current global circumstances suggest it is likely that this virus will cause a pandemic." For comparison sake, "pandemic" is the classification used for a global outbreak like the 2009 H1N1 outbreak, while SARS (2003) and Ebola (2013-16) reached a regional outbreak or "epidemic" classification.

To date, Wisconsin has been monitoring 21 people for COVID-19 – 19 have tested negative, one has tested positive (patient has fully recovered) and one has results still pending. It was **announced yesterday** that the Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene in Madison and the Milwaukee Health Department in Milwaukee have been approved as testing sites, which should allow for faster testing results going forward.

For up-to-date information on the state and federal picture, please visit the **DHS Outbreaks** webpage and the **CDC Weekly Report**.

**WHA's role and current efforts:**

WHA is focusing our attention on assisting the state's hospitals, health systems and government agencies in preparing should the coronavirus become more widespread.

We are also working to ensure open communication channels with local, state, and federal public health and emergency preparedness agencies, as well as partnering with other organizations such as the American Hospital Association, Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative and the Wisconsin Medical Society to disseminate timely and relevant information. WHA has assisted in this capacity with previous response efforts related to Ebola, H1N1, SARS and others, and routinely assists with seasonal influenza response efforts.

WHA's current efforts related to coronavirus include:

- Coordinating with the WI DHS to survey members' needs and concerns, such as personal protective equipment (PPE) shortages, and sharing that information with state health officials.

- Relaying suggested preparation best practices and up-to-date threat assessments.
- Participating in the Wisconsin Health Emergency Readiness Collation (HERC) advisory group, which coordinates with regional public health and emergency response efforts.

***WHA continues to be in close contact with DHS and we encourage you to attend the DHS Capitol briefing tomorrow at 9:15 a.m. in 412 East. Appearing will be DHS Secretary Andrea Palm, State Health Officer Jeanne Ayers, and Bureau of Communicable Disease Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Ryan Westergaard.***

**Partnering with government officials:**

We are engaging federal and state agencies to clarify the process for temporarily waiving federal regulations that limit rural hospital inpatient capacity, if necessary. These same preparations have been made under similar circumstance in the past, namely the H1N1 virus. We are also working with federal officials to clarify the process to access the national PPE stockpile should there be shortages.

Last Friday, U.S. Senators Ron Johnson and Gary Peters (chairman and ranking member of Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs) **sent a bipartisan letter** to U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar, and United States Department of Homeland Security Acting Secretary Chad Wolf, requesting information about their "assessment and planned actions to mitigate shortages of PPE and critical supplies that might become essential if COVID-19 becomes a significant problem in the United States."

These are just two examples of how our lawmakers and governmental agencies can assist. We will be in touch if further needs arise, particularly at the state level.

Again, for up-to-date information on the state and federal picture, please visit the **DHS Outbreaks** webpage and the **CDC Weekly Report**, and please do not hesitate to contact WHA's **Jon Hoelter** or **Kyle O'Brien** with any questions.

WHA very much appreciates our collaborative relationship with you and your staff and look forward to our continuing partnership.



Eric Borgerding  
President & CEO  
Wisconsin Hospital Association

Wisconsin Hospital Association  
5510 Research Park Drive  
Madison, WI 53711  
Phone: 608.274.1820



[Opt Out or Unsubscribe](#)