

Wisconsin Hospital Association, Inc.

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WHA Applauds Governor Walker, Legislature for Supporting Nurse Licensure Compact

PLATTEVILLE, WI (December 11, 2017) ----- At Southwest Health today, Governor Scott Walker signed into law Senate Bill 417, legislation to maintain Wisconsin’s participation in the enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact (eNLC) and ensure unnecessary licensure barriers do not prevent nurses from serving patients in Wisconsin communities. This bill will allow 112,000 nurses in Wisconsin the opportunity keep their interstate license and directly impacts over 500 nurses in southwest Wisconsin who depend on this compact license to practice across state borders. The bill was authored by Sen. Howard Marklein, Reps. Nancy VanderMeer and Travis Tranel and cosponsored by a bipartisan group of 97 Wisconsin lawmakers.

Since 2000, Wisconsin has been part of an interstate nurse licensure agreement, which reduces regulatory burden on nurses looking to practice in Wisconsin from other states and also for Wisconsin nurses serving patients in other compact states. In 2015, this nurse licensure compact was updated and quickly adopted by 26 states—initiating the process for states in the current nurse licensure compact, like Wisconsin, to transfer to the enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact. Wisconsin needed to enact legislation to join the eNLC.

“An adequately staffed health care workforce is critical to our hospitals and health systems so they can continue to deliver accessible, efficient and high-quality health care around the clock in their communities,” according to WHA President/CEO Eric Borgerding. “WHA was proud to lead a coalition of health care organizations, including statewide nursing groups, to garner broad, bipartisan support of the eNLC in the Legislature and see this bill signed into law today by Governor Walker.”

WHA has been working closely with the Wisconsin Board of Nursing, the Department of Safety and Professional Services and several health care and nursing organizations to enact this legislation this year.

“High-quality health care attracts high-quality professionals, and Wisconsin health care is ranked at or near the top by many national measures,” according to Ann Zenk, Wisconsin Hospital Association vice president for workforce and clinical practice. “Sustaining membership in a nurse licensure compact by joining the eNLC will benefit high-quality health care by making it easier for patients to access care by Wisconsin nurses. The enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact helps to remove licensure barriers for nurses successfully recruited to work in Wisconsin’s high-quality health care facilities from other states.”

“Governor Walker, Senator Marklein, Representatives VanderMeer and Tranel have been dedicated to sustaining and improving high-quality health care in Wisconsin – especially for those living in rural communities,” said Borgerding. “WHA has been working closely with these lawmakers this legislative session to provide additional funding to train physicians, advanced practice clinicians and allied health professionals in rural communities as part of the biennial state budget and the Rural Wisconsin Initiative. By signing Senate Bill 417, Governor Walker is taking additional steps to ensure that licensure doesn’t become an unnecessary hurdle for qualified nurses and the employers that depend on a nursing workforce in Wisconsin.”

The eNLC will be effective January 19, 2018.

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