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Senator Dale Kooyenga Earns 2020 Health Care Advocate of the Year Award

For his efforts in helping advance important health care policy, Wisconsin State Senator Dale Kooyenga (R-Brookfield) has been named the Wisconsin Hospital Association's 2020 Health Care Advocate of the Year. Sen. Kooyenga received the award from Peggy Troy, President and CEO of Children's Wisconsin and a member of the WHA Board of Directors, who praised the senator for his "strong support of policies that have positively impacted all our state's hospitals." Normally awarded during WHA's Advocacy Day with more than 1,000 hospital advocates in attendance, the COVID-19 pandemic caused this year's award to be presented virtually.

"Some of the most rewarding and consequential work I've done as a member of the Legislature has been in the area of health care and advocating on behalf of the top-flight providers in the 5th Senate District," Sen. Kooyenga said in accepting the award. "That work would not be possible without the talented and dedicated team at the Wisconsin Hospital Association. It's a true honor to earn such an important recognition, and I look forward to continuing to build on this great relationship for years to come."

Troy listed numerous areas where Sen. Kooyenga has used his role as a state lawmaker to improve hospitals' ability to serve patients, including:

- Shepherding comprehensive, bipartisan telehealth legislation through both houses of the state Legislature; updating Wisconsin's Medicaid laws to better reflect today's technology.
- Supporting legislation that aligned our state's mental health records law with federal HIPAA requirements.
- Leading legislation to improve Wisconsin's hospital discharge data program known as the Wisconsin Health Care Data Modernization Act.
- Supporting funding increases for all hospitals to improve access to care in rural and urban hospitals.
- Reducing the state's regulatory burden on hospitals.

Troy noted that Sen. Kooyenga's attention to sound health care policy will be needed as hospitals and health systems continue to recover from unprecedented lost revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She also discussed how Children's Wisconsin is already using the tools made available in Sen. Kooyenga's telehealth legislation to improve access – particularly to behavioral health care.

"While we continue to deal with the challenging financial aftermath of the initial COVID-19 experience, we will continue to be there for our patients who have significant care needs," Troy said. "It's a challenge we're prepared for. We look forward to partnering with Senator Kooyenga and others in the months ahead to ensure hospitals and health systems have the resources we need to care for patients."

"Senator Kooyenga's ability to comprehend and act upon issues affecting hospitals has been greatly appreciated," said WHA President/CEO Eric Borgerding. "In health care, good policy makes good politics. Dale is a citizen legislator who serves our state and country in more ways than one. Today's recognition is about his service to our state's hospitals, helping them sustain the nation-leading patient care Wisconsin has become known for."

"On behalf of all our state's hospitals, I want to say thank you for your continued commitment and partnership with WHA," Troy said.