

WHA Board Meeting Highlights Advocacy Successes, Discusses Outlook for 2024

The WHA Board of Directors met on April 18 in Madison to review recent advocacy successes in the state Legislature and preview what is ahead for the association for the rest of the year.

In the President's Report, President and CEO Eric Borgerding provided an outlook on WHA's "very full plate" in 2024 and key opportunities for member engagement. He walked through a number of policy initiatives that WHA staff will be spending time learning and evaluating in the so-called "off-season." WHA staff will seek member input in the months ahead.

"We've just come off a legislative session like I have never seen before in my career," said Borgerding. "But it has shed some light on what's ahead, and WHA's preparations for next session have already begun," he added.

Borgerding also addressed official board business, including plans for immediately filling board vacancies and details for the upcoming board retreat this summer. WHA Senior Vice President of Finance and Chief Operating Officer Brian Potter provided a positive report of WHA's financials in the Audit & Investment Committee Report.



WHA Senior Vice President of Finance/COO Brian Potter, WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding and WHA 2024 Board Chair David Hartberg at WHA's April 18 board meeting.

WHA CheckPoint Update and Quality Measures Changes

WHA Chief Quality Officer Nadine Allen provided an overview of WHA's [CheckPoint](#) website, which celebrated its 20-year anniversary in March, and recent updates that have been made. CheckPoint's mission is to serve as a consumer-focused website that provides reliable, valid measures of health care in Wisconsin hospitals to facilitate the selection of quality health care and assist quality improvement activities within Wisconsin's hospital community.

Allen then brought forward three measures recommended by the Quality Measures Team. Representing over 80 Wisconsin hospital members and chaired by Kris Melaas-Merkel of Aspirus, the Quality Measures Team regularly review and maintain more than 40 measures on the CheckPoint website with the broad goal to bring measures forward that are applicable to all Wisconsin hospitals. The WHA board approved three recommended measures which are in alignment with changes from the Centers on Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The measure additions will be for the SEP-1 bundled measure (Severe Sepsis and Septic Shock), PC-07 Severe Obstetric Complications, and the AHRQ PSI-08 In-Hospital Fall-Associated Fracture Rate.

WHA Workforce Report and *So Many Options* Campaign

WHA Senior Vice President Workforce and Clinical Practice Ann Zenk provided an extensive update on the release of [WHA's 20th annual workforce report](#), including a wide array of opportunities to present the story of the hospital and health system workforce to media, to legislators and to health care stakeholders. Zenk highlighted the topline of the report: Wisconsin's health care workforce vacancy rates are stabilizing but still critical, and the nursing workforce isn't growing fast enough.

Zenk also discussed the report's influence with Governor Evers' newly formed [Health Care Workforce Taskforce](#) and updated the board on the taskforce's recent activities. The taskforce has been charged with developing an action plan by Sept. 1 for recommendations for the Governor to include in his next budget plan.

WHA Vice President External Affairs Kari Hofer provided an update on the [So Many Options](#) campaign which promotes the variety of career options in the health care industry to young people. Since its [launch](#) on Feb. 7, the campaign has [reached millions](#) and successfully garnered almost 100,000 website views driven by both paid digital advertising and organic communication efforts by engaging with key stakeholders and partners. *So Many Options* recently exhibited at the Wisconsin HOSA State Leadership Conference in Wisconsin Dells and presented [four scholarships](#) to students who plan to pursue an educational path to a career in health care.

The paid portion of the campaign is funded through May 2024. Hofer reminded the board the website will continue to live on, and staff are exploring opportunities for enhancements to further connect young people with career resources. Hofer also said the campaign will continue to seek additional funding in order to extend the paid digital advertising.

State Advocacy Update

WHA Senior Vice President Government Relations Kyle O'Brien provided the board with an update on the final months of the 2023-2024 legislative session, including top advocacy successes. Chief priorities included the enactment of [legislation](#) that directs Wisconsin's Medicaid program to pursue a waiver of the federal IMD exclusion and [a bill](#) that reforms the state-supported Graduate Medical Education grant program. Governor Evers signed both pieces of legislation into law on Friday, March 22.

O'Brien also discussed the extensive advocacy work done to advance legislation designed to remove barriers to discharging patients out of a hospital when they no longer need acute-level care. The legislation, [Assembly Bill 1088](#), which passed the State Assembly and received support from Governor Evers, didn't receive a floor vote in the State Senate.

The bill received public hearings in both the Assembly and the Senate in February 2024, where [several WHA members testified](#) on the need to create a next-of-kin law in Wisconsin to allow for an expedited admission to post-acute care facilities when a patient is incapacitated. According to O'Brien, advocating for this legislation will remain a key priority for WHA throughout the summer and into the next legislative session.

WHA's Kari Hofer recapped WHA's Advocacy Day which took place on March 20 in Madison which drew more than 700 attendees. She reported feedback from the post-event survey revealed high satisfaction with the event and specific comments of the Health Care Quality Showcase at the State Capitol Rotunda. The Health Care Quality Showcase featured 26 displays from WHA members highlighting their health care quality initiatives. A review, including photos, of WHA's Advocacy Day 2024 can be found [here](#). Hofer thanked the board for their leadership in encouraging their teams to attend and participate in Advocacy Day and reminded members to save the date for next year—April 9, 2025.

Other Articles in this Issue

- [WHA Hosts CMS and Hospital Leaders to Discuss Burden Reduction](#)
- [WHA Board Meeting Highlights Advocacy Successes, Discusses Outlook for 2024](#)
- [Business Groups File Lawsuit to Block FTC Non-Compete Ban](#)
- [HHS Finalizes Rule on 340B Administrative Dispute Resolution Process](#)
- [Aspirus Health CEO Matt Heywood Discusses Hospital Closure Impacts, Strategies for an Evolving Health Care Environment](#)
- [WHA Seeks Quality Improvement Stories for Annual Report](#)