

Wisconsin Hospital Association Announces Leadership Succession

Eric Borgerding retiring after 23 years with WHA; Kyle O'Brien to take over as president and CEO in July 2025

WHA announced Nov. 26, 2024, that President and CEO Eric Borgerding will retire next year and be succeeded by WHA Senior Vice President of Government Relations Kyle O'Brien.



Eric Borgerding and Kyle O'Brien

Borgerding, who has been with WHA for 23 years, including the last 10 as President and CEO, will step down on June 30, 2025. O'Brien, a 12-year veteran of WHA, assumes his new role on July 1, 2025, and will become just the 7th president and CEO in the organization's 104-year history. Borgerding will continue as senior advisor through the remainder of 2025.

"Under Eric's outstanding leadership, WHA has become one of the most influential advocacy organizations in Wisconsin, unifying and amplifying the voice of hospitals and health systems across the state," said David Hartberg, president and CEO of Vernon Memorial Hospital and chair of the WHA Board of Directors. "WHA is also blessed with a tremendous staff and Eric and Kyle have a very close partnership, one that has not only produced thoughtful, effective strategies to address legislative, regulatory and reimbursement issues, but that has also allowed us to look inward for our next president and CEO, ensuring strong leadership and impactful advocacy for years to come."

Borgerding's government relations career in Wisconsin spans nearly 40 years. At WHA since January 2002, he was named president and CEO in 2015. During Borgerding's tenure, WHA has become one of the most effective advocacy organizations in Wisconsin, recognized for its proactive and bipartisan public policy impacting health care quality and access, including: increasing the number of doctors and nurses in Wisconsin by significantly boosting funding for education and training and restoring and preserving Wisconsin's balanced medical malpractice system; strengthening the health care safety-net and sustaining access to care across the state by creating Wisconsin's Medicaid Directed Payment and Disproportionate Share Hospital programs; and overhauling Wisconsin's hospital regulations for more efficient and cost-effective operation.

"Representing Wisconsin's hospitals and health systems and working so closely with the dedicated people who lead and staff them has been a privilege for which I am immensely grateful," Borgerding said. "I am also very proud of the talented team that has come together at WHA over many years. It is an honor to work beside such outstanding colleagues and friends, especially now as one of them, Kyle O'Brien, prepares to take the reins."

O'Brien brings 15 years of experience in government relations and advocacy to the top WHA post. He was recruited by Borgerding in 2012 to join WHA as vice president, government relations and was promoted to Senior Vice President in 2015. Over the past 12 years he has taken on leadership roles in much of WHA's public policy efforts, including lobbying, grassroots and political advocacy, communications strategy, as well as key elements of WHA operations.

"Under Eric's leadership, the WHA team has focused on serving our members with credible knowledge and strategic advocacy," said O'Brien. "I'm grateful for the foundation he's created at WHA and the years of advice, counsel and friendship he's provided me – both professionally and personally. It's with that knowledge and experience that I'm excited to take on a new role at WHA and am grateful to the Board of Directors for selecting me as the next president and CEO."

"During my tenure at WHA I've walked the halls of countless hospitals, oftentimes alongside state lawmakers, witnessing the positive impact hospitals have on the people of Wisconsin. There is no other industry I'd rather represent with a talented WHA team that includes some of the brightest health care policy minds in the state."

O'Brien began his career in Wisconsin politics working for several members of the Wisconsin State Assembly and State Senate, including staffing the state's budget-writing Joint Finance Committee. Prior to joining WHA, O'Brien served under Wisconsin Department of Health Services Secretary Dennis Smith and Deputy Secretary Kitty Rhoades as the legislative advisor. At WHA, he has been instrumental in crafting the association's proactive agenda while navigating complex issues through the legislative and regulatory processes.

"Earlier this year when Eric informed us of his plans to retire in 2025, the WHA Board of Directors immediately initiated a succession planning process," said John Russell, president and CEO of Prairie Ridge Health and chair of the WHA Succession Planning Committee. "We quickly determined WHA did not need to look far for its next leader. We are fortunate to have a proven talent like Kyle ready and able to step into those shoes and lead us into the future."

O'Brien, originally from Union Grove, Wisconsin, holds a Bachelor of Science degree in finance and marketing from the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse and lives near Madison with his wife, Laura, and their two children.

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