

State Budget Committee Co-Chair Rep. Mark Born Shares Insights on State Budget with WHA Board

WHA staff discuss 2024 outcomes, legislative priorities for 2025

Rep. Mark Born (R-Beaver Dam) joined the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) board of directors meeting on Dec. 12 to provide insight into the upcoming state budget and other legislative priorities that may impact Wisconsin hospitals in the coming year.

In his introduction, WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding praised Born's leadership and commitment to health care, emphasizing Born's understanding of the health care system's challenges. "He really understands the struggles and challenges you are all dealing with," Borgerding said.

Born opened his comments by acknowledging the complexity of the state's upcoming budget process and his deep appreciation for the health care professionals in the room.



Rep. Mark Born (center) was a guest speaker at WHA's Board of Directors meeting on Dec. 12, 2024.

"It's going to be an interesting budget this year—every budget is different," said Born. "We will try to do what we can do to help Wisconsin. We know the value of what you all bring to our state."

Born's remarks centered around addressing health care-specific challenges. He emphasized the importance of continued investment in health care and recognized that changes may be necessary to keep pace with inflationary costs. "We need to find a way to continue to build on reimbursement," Born remarked, acknowledging that while progress has been made, more work is needed to ensure health care providers are adequately funded.

Born addressed the workforce challenges facing Wisconsin hospitals, particularly the difficulty of attracting and retaining skilled health care workers. Born pointed to the significant gaps in health care workforce availability, especially in rural areas. He discussed the broader issue of workforce shortages and noted that many solutions would require efforts beyond state policy alone, saying, "This is not just a Wisconsin issue; it's a national challenge that requires sound immigration policies that go beyond what we can do at the state level."

Dr. Alan Kaplan emphasized that Born understands not only the financial complexities of health care but also the social dynamics that indirectly impact health care systems. Drawing on his experience serving on the UW Authority Board, Born remarked, "Serving on the UW board has been helpful in understanding the key issues. I was able to learn from my local folks at Beaver Dam and

Columbus, but when I got on the board, I learned so much more.”

Despite the challenging political dynamics, Born remained optimistic about the ability of the Legislature and hospitals to work together. “I think we always figure out a way,” he concluded. His comments reinforced the importance of continued collaboration between WHA and state legislators to address the pressing issues facing Wisconsin’s health care system.

President’s Report

In his President’s Report, Borgerding reviewed the association’s 2024 goals and outcomes, highlighting its policy and advocacy work and member engagement throughout the year. A notable success was the health care workforce promotion campaign, [So Many Options](#), which not only garnered significant statewide attention, but has helped foster valuable partnerships like the collaboration with HOSA-Future Health Professionals, including the work [establishing new HOSA chapters](#). This work reflects the importance of strategic partnerships in addressing workforce challenges.

Borgerding further highlighted the [Wisconsin Hospitals State PAC & Conduit](#) activity in 2024, and its success in disbursing nearly \$410,000 to support candidates for state office who value hospitals. Borgerding thanked board members for leading by example in contributing, demonstrating a unified effort in political advocacy. However, he noted the 2024 fundraising goal was not yet met, with roughly \$9,000 left to reach the goal of \$350,000.

WHA’s Vice President of External Affairs Kari Hofer reminded the board the campaign runs through the end of the year, saying, “We are proud to have 100% board participation in the Wisconsin Hospitals PAC & Conduit, but we need your help in encouraging your peers to make an individual contribution before December 31 to help us reach goal.”

Looking ahead, Borgerding highlighted the recent leadership [succession announcement](#) and recognized the board for their leadership during the process.

WHA Information Center Report: Key Updates and Upcoming Tools

Vice President of the WHA Information Center (WHAIC) Brian Competente provided an update on 2024 activities, highlighting several key advancements aimed at enhancing the value of data available to WHA members.

One standout development is the [Price Finder](#) dashboard, created to support WHA’s ongoing advocacy efforts around state-level transparency. This interactive tool allows users to easily locate hospitals across Wisconsin via an interactive map, providing direct links to each hospital’s machine-readable files and shoppable services. The dashboard has proven to be an invaluable resource for member hospitals and external stakeholders alike.

Competente gave a preview of two new dashboards slated for release in early 2025. The *Border State Exchange Dashboard* will help border hospitals better understand their market dynamics by showing how many Wisconsinites are seeking services outside of the state. This tool will offer critical insights to help hospitals address regional competition and patient retention. Additionally, the *Community Health Storyboard* will utilize Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI’s) demographic and socioeconomic data to provide hospitals with a deeper understanding of the communities they serve. By visualizing this data, hospitals can tailor their outreach and service offerings to better meet the needs of their local populations.

Members can access these two new tools, along with other members-only resources, through the [MyWHA](#) member portal of WHA.org.

Advocacy Update

WHA Senior Vice President of Government Relations Kyle O’Brien provided the board with an update on both public messaging and public policy work being done to address increased challenges that hospitals and health systems face trying to be reimbursed for patient care. O’Brien said that he expects the Legislature to again take up legislation that attempts to reform prior authorization processes and discussed how WHA plans to engage on these issues. O’Brien pointed to recent Medicare Advantage regulations, legislation in Congress and state model legislation produced by the American Hospital Association.

O’Brien also reported on next steps WHA’s government relations team is taking to adopt a “next of kin” law for transferring certain incapacitated patients from a hospital to a post-acute care setting, such as a nursing home or community-based residential facility. Last session, legislation received support from Governor Tony Evers and a voice vote in the State Assembly, but did not reach the floor of the State Senate. O’Brien stated that WHA’s government relations team has had productive conversations with members of the Senate during the off season.

WHA Vice President of Federal and State Relations Jon Hoelter gave a brief update on WHA’s recent trip to Washington, DC, highlighting the importance of Congress funding year-end extensions to Medicare coverage of telehealth, the Hospital at Home program and the Medicare-Dependent and Low-Volume rural hospital designations. Hoelter said Congress had been simultaneously working on a short-term continuing resolution for funding the government through mid-March of 2025 and longer-term extensions for our health care items and other spending provisions, but that it was unlikely those longer-term extensions would make it into the final package. Hoelter also previewed what will be in store for health care in 2025, noting that we will need to be on guard for

potential health care spending cuts that could be used to fund things like tax cuts in a GOP reconciliation package in 2025.

Finally, WHA Senior Vice President of Public Policy Joanne Alig discussed development of WHA's Medicaid budget priorities. Borgerding provided an update to the Board regarding discussions with the Governor's office related to these Medicaid priorities prior to introduction of the Governor's biennial budget bill in early 2025.

Other Articles in this Issue

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- [Wisconsin Hospitals Provided \\$2.3 Billion in Community Benefits in 2023](#)
- [State Budget Committee Co-Chair Rep. Mark Born Shares Insights on State Budget with WHA Board](#)
- [WHA Urges Congress to Act Quickly on Health Care Extensions as Federal Spending Package Collapses](#)
- [Wisconsin Hospitals State PAC & Conduit — \\$8,740 Remaining to Goal](#)
- [GUEST COLUMN: Ransomware: What to Know to Create an Incident Response Plan](#)
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