

## Gov Evers Signs Legislation Transferring \$15 million For Western Wisconsin Hospital Funding

On Feb. 28, Governor Tony Evers signed into law a piece of legislation that authorizes the transfer of \$15 million to be used for increased access to health care in western Wisconsin, responding to the recently announced closures of Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire and St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls. The funding was previously dedicated to increase inpatient behavioral health care at Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's. Gov. Evers signed the bill into law with a partial line-item veto that removes requirements that the funding be used for capital expenses related to emergency department services. The veto also would result in the funding being available outside Eau Claire and Chippewa counties.

In response to the Governor's action, WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding commended lawmakers and the Governor in a [statement](#) to the media:

*"WHA thanks Senator James and Representative Summerfield for their efforts, and applauds the quick action by both the Legislature and Governor Evers to repurpose and make available \$15 million in emergency funding to support the safety net hospitals and the services they provide in and around Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls," said Borgerding. "We look forward to working with the Joint Committee on Finance and the Department of Health Services to implement these grants while redoubling our efforts to achieve long-term solutions that support Wisconsin's safety-net hospitals and working together to sustain the many services they alone stand up and provide in both rural and urban settings."*

Simultaneous with issuing this line-item veto, the Department of Health Services (DHS) issued a [formal request](#) to the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee that asked for the \$15 million to be made available to a broader geographic area that aligns with 18 counties in [DHS's western region](#) and allow the funding to be used for capital and operational expenses related to emergency department care, behavioral health, inpatient obstetrics and gynecology, and certain emergency response services.

The Joint Finance Committee needs to act on this request before funding is made available. Republican legislators from the Eau Claire and Chippewa areas have voiced their opposition to making the funds available to a broader portion of western Wisconsin.

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