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WHA Physician Leaders Council Meeting Focuses on Impactful Workforce Advocacy

The WHA Physician Leaders Council meeting on April 13 focused on WHA public policy advocacy regarding workforce and commercial payer practices advocacy and featured a discussion with Wisconsin Department of Health Services Chief Medical Officer Jon Meiman, MD, on COVID trends.

Dr. Meiman and the council reviewed and shared information on the current status of COVID prevalence and treatment, including the evolving federal test-to-treat program. Dr. Meiman noted that after initial scarcity of new COVID antiviral therapeutics in late 2021, supply is now robust. The council and Dr. Meiman discussed strategies for communicating to clinicians and patients that scarcity is no longer a near-term concern for the newest COVID therapeutics.

WHA General Counsel Matthew Stanford and Senior Vice President of Workforce and Clinical Practice Ann Zenk led discussions of several WHA workforce advocacy efforts.

Wisconsin continues to rank high in the list of best states for clinicians to practice. Most recently, a national [WalletHub](#) report ranked Wisconsin as the 3rd best state for physicians to practice medicine. Stanford and Zenk pointed to such rankings as a sign that WHA's proactive workforce-focused public policy efforts continue to be impactful.

Stanford discussed the national reaction by nurses and other health care professionals to the RaDonda Vaught criminal conviction in Tennessee stemming from a medical error. He noted that Wisconsin's health care professionals should be reassured that the WHA-championed 2011 Wisconsin Quality Improvement Act included reforms that de-criminalized negligent medical errors in Wisconsin.

Stanford also shared WHA resources available to members regarding 2021 Wisconsin Act 209, which broadly expands felony penalties for violence and threats of violence against health care professionals. WHA led the effort in crafting and advocating for Act 209. Wisconsin is now one of two states in the country that broadly and specifically establish direct criminal penalties for threats of violence against health care providers.

Stanford and Zenk discussed the Medical Examining Board's chaperone rulemaking, and WHA's advocacy thus far regarding the board's proposal. Noting concerns expressed in 2021 by the WHA Physician Leaders Council regarding the rulemaking proposal, WHA organized comments from WHA members to the board regarding the economic impact of their proposed rule. As a result, the Department of Safety and Professional Services indicated that more than \$55 million in annual costs associated with the proposed rule were reported to the board. Subsequently, other concerns have been raised that the rule, which creates a "rebuttable presumption" of sexual misconduct unless a chaperone or observer is present, would violate Wisconsin's statutory due process provision in s. 440.20(3) that specifies that a board's burden of proof in a disciplinary proceeding is "a preponderance of evidence."

Zenk discussed key highlights of WHA's 2022 Wisconsin Health Care Workforce Report, including six key strategies identified in the report to support Wisconsin's health care workforce: build public-private partnerships to "Grow Our Own" workforce; promote rapid innovations to retain and recruit health care workers; break down barriers to top-of-skill practice; bolster acceptance and efficient utilization of integrated health care technology; reduce regulatory burden and increase regulatory flexibility; and support care in the best setting.

Zenk also highlighted licensure delays and upcoming changes to the Department of Safety and Professional Services licensing process. She discussed the upcoming May 16 launch of a new online license application platform that will replace the current paper, fax and email applications for 72 Wisconsin health care occupational licenses. More information can be found [here](#).

WHA Senior Vice President of Public Policy Joanne Alig provided updates on WHA's policy advocacy focusing on improving

commercial payer practices, including WHA opposition to insurer-mandated "white bagging."

Alig also led a discussion of a follow-up report from the Business Health Care Group to its 2019 Wisconsin Physician Value Report. The Business Health Care Group maintained and continues to indicate that the study could be used to steer patients to specific providers. However, in 2019, the WHA Physician Leaders Council identified several flaws with the original report, and Alig noted that many of the same flaws remain, including a low 80% confidence level in the results.

WHA Vice President of Education and Marketing Leigh Ann Larson announced that [registration](#) has opened for WHA's 2022 Physician Leadership Development Conference taking place June 16-17 in Green Bay. This conference is geared toward physician leaders with both clinical and management interests whose responsibilities include problem solving, leadership of clinical colleagues and managing needed change in a rapidly evolving health care environment.