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Sen. Marklein Discusses State Budget with WHA Board, Reaffirms Support for Wisconsin Hospitals

State Sen. Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) joined the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) board of directors meeting on Feb. 20 to provide insight into the 2025-2027 State Budget and how Republican lawmakers are responding to Governor Evers' proposal. Marklein is a co-chair, alongside Rep. Mark Born (R-Beaver Dam), of the Joint Committee on Finance, the state Legislature's powerful budget-writing committee.

WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding introduced Marklein, commending his extensive experience serving on multiple hospital boards and his strong understanding of the challenges health care providers face.

"What is excellent about Senator Marklein is the perspective he brings to the table in all of health care," said Borgerding. "He has been a key supporter on critical hospital funding issues, including Medicaid reimbursement increases in the last few budgets, and the Data Modernization Act that helped expand the type of data collected," he added.

In his opening remarks, Marklein praised Wisconsin hospitals and health systems for their service to their communities. He recognized their important role stating, "We need all of you to be successful in order for health care to be successful."



L to R: Eric Borgerding, Sen. Marklein, WHA Board Chair Jeff Bahr, MD.

Marklein highlighted his commitment to reducing regulatory burdens for hospitals, citing the reform of Wisconsin DHS 124, which aligned state and federal hospital regulations to eliminate redundant requirements.

“It was just common sense. Why should hospitals comply with two different sets of regulations? Let’s just have one set of rules,” said Marklein.

Building on his record of supporting hospitals, Marklein turned to the state budget, which was introduced by Gov. Evers on Feb. 18, and provided insights into the GOP-led Legislature approach. With a projected \$4.3 billion state surplus, Marklein emphasized the importance of responsible budgeting to ensure all stakeholders, including hospitals, receive the resources they need without unnecessary financial strain.

Pledging support for hospitals, Marklein said, “I have gone to bat for hospitals a number of times on budget issues, and I’ve got the scars to prove it. But I know what I did was right, and I am happy to support you.”

Board members commended Marklein for his support and approach. Spooner Health President and CEO Mike Schafer said, “I just want to thank you for what you did for hospitals in the Medicaid program. It’s great that we have people like you in Madison.”

“Whenever I have an issue or something I want to talk to you about, you always take my call,” said Upland Hills President and CEO Lisa Schnedler.

Additionally, Marklein noted legislative dynamics that will play a key role in determining reimbursement for hospitals. He emphasized the need for ongoing collaboration between hospitals and policymakers to navigate these and future challenges. His remarks reinforced the

importance of continued engagement between WHA members and elected officials to advocate for public policies that support hospitals and health systems and the patients they serve.

Board Updates

Borgerding presented WHA's 2025 goals document to the Board. Progress reports on the 2025 goals are provided at each meeting throughout the year.

The WHA team provided additional updates on state and federal policy matters impacting hospitals, including Gov. Evers' biennial budget proposal and its potential implications for Medicaid and hospital funding. Staff also discussed Medicaid proposals coming out of Washington, DC, WHA's advocacy response to these proposed changes and how each could impact state policy decisions.