



For immediate release

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BUSINESSES, COMMUNITY GROUPS AND HEALTH PROVIDERS ANNOUNCE COALITION TO 'STOP THE SHIFT'

StopTheShift.org calls on Legislature to approve hospital assessment to ease the hidden health tax on employers and consumers

Milwaukee, WI, March 14, 2008 — A growing group of Wisconsin businesses, community groups and health care providers today announced a new coalition supporting the proposed Wisconsin hospital assessment. StopTheShift.org members say it's time that the State Legislature do something about the "hidden tax" that businesses have paid for too many years because of significant underfunding of Wisconsin's Medicaid program.

The coalition's broad-based membership includes the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC), the Greater Milwaukee Committee, Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association, Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups, Community Advocates, Make It Work Milwaukee!, community health clinics, major health care providers, and other community groups.

Under Governor Jim Doyle's proposal, Wisconsin's hospitals would pay an assessment to the state and the dollars would be leveraged to bring an additional \$400 million in federal funds to the state. A significant portion of the new dollars will go toward higher reimbursements for the care of Medicaid patients.

"The business community is paying a tremendous financial penalty through the cost-shifting that happens because the care of Medicaid patients is severely underfunded today," said Timothy Sheehy, president of the MMAC. "With more dollars going to Medicaid, it will help to reverse the need of hospitals to shift the cost of patient care to businesses."

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The coalition has established a web site – www.StopTheShift.org – to help educate people on an issue they say threatens the competitiveness of Wisconsin’s business community. The web site also provides a way for businesses and individuals to join the effort to change a situation that sends the wrong message about Wisconsin’s business climate.

“Wisconsin’s hospitals have not received a rate increase for inpatient Medicaid services in 12 years, and the gap between what it costs a hospital to treat a Medicaid patient and what a hospital is paid for those services will only continue to grow,” said Jon Vice, president and chief executive officer of Children’s Hospital and Health System.

The Wisconsin Hospital Association calculates that the Medicaid shortfall for Wisconsin hospitals has totaled \$2.98 billion over the last 12 years.

“The reality is that a big portion of the cost of caring for our most vulnerable patients is shifted to employers and consumers who end up paying higher health insurance premiums,” said John Oliverio, president and chief executive officer of Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare.

The hospital assessment was rejected by the Wisconsin Legislature last year leaving \$400 million in federal money on the table.

“The federal funding that was left on the table included \$155 million that would have flowed to southeastern Wisconsin – money to help support the ‘safety net’ hospitals in the Milwaukee area that care for many people enrolled in Medicaid,” said Nick Turkal, M.D., president and chief executive officer of Aurora Health Care. “The hospital assessment is the single most important thing legislators can do right now to help address health care costs in Wisconsin.”

Business leaders say the assessment offers great benefits.

“This would be a win for Wisconsin businesses and a win for the state. Reducing cost shifting will lessen the burden on business and make our companies more competitive globally,” says Dave Rayburn, president and chief executive officer of Modine Manufacturing, Inc. in Racine.

StopTheShift.org/Add two

Leo Brideau, President and CEO of Columbia St. Mary's, added, "The variety of supporters for the StopTheShift initiative is highly significant. They represent a broad cross section of individuals, business, providers and community leaders who are asking for a common-sense solution to the issue of rising costs."

Members of the StopTheShift.org coalition include:

- Greater Milwaukee Committee
- Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce
- Milwaukee Health Care Partnership
- Wisconsin Hospital Association
- Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association
- Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups
- Community Advocates
- Make It Work Milwaukee!
- Mental Health America of Wisconsin
- Aurora Health Care
- Children's Hospital and Health System
- Columbia St. Mary's
- Froedtert and Community Health
- Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare

For more information about the coalition go to www.StopTheShift.org

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