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COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS SUPPORT HOSPITAL ASSESSMENT PLAN

MADISON... The Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association (WPHCA) has joined the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) and several other organizations in encouraging the legislature to quickly endorse the Governor's proposal to implement a hospital assessment for its ability to fill the current budget hole and draw down more federal funds, according to Stephanie Harrison, the Executive Director of WPHCA.

"The hospital assessment would finally allow the state to get close to maximizing what we receive back in federal funding support, thereby allowing providers like Community Health Centers and hospitals to extend their care to those populations who are in need," said Harrison. "With the existing budget deficit so drastic, and so many health care providers supportive of the parameters placed around the implementation of new assessment, passing on it would be a lost opportunity."

Harrison says Medicaid makes up almost half of the total revenue Wisconsin's Community Health Centers receive and is the key piece of their funding methodology. Combined, Wisconsin's 17 Health Centers provided primary, dental and mental health care services to over 85,000 Medicaid-covered patients in 2007.

"If the new assessment is created, Governor Doyle and the legislature will have identified a viable way for all providers to maintain their existing Medicaid patient levels, particularly those who treat underserved children," said Harrison. "If the assessment proposal fails, existing health care programs could be in danger of serious funding reductions and Medicaid rates for providers could be cut again. Such moves would dramatically reduce health care access for those in need."

Medicaid is a critically important source of coverage for underserved populations who utilize Community Health Centers as their medical homes. According to Harrison, any reduction in Medicaid spending levels would do immediate harm to Community Health Centers, in part because of their reliance on those dollars through the cost-based reimbursement revenue source.

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