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Aging Population, Shrinking Workforce and Increased Regulations *WHA Health Care Workforce Report Reveals Current Challenges, Suggests Solutions*

Facts and data detailed in WHA’s latest health care workforce report point to the continuation of concerning demographic, employment and regulatory trends in Wisconsin that could threaten access to care unless wise policy strategies are embraced.

The 2019 Wisconsin Health Care Workforce Report is the 16th annual report designed to assist health care entities and elected policymakers in helping to maintain Wisconsin as a source for nation-leading high-quality, high-value health care. The report draws from national and state data and studies, reports from other associations and findings in the field to offer recommendations for action.

Among the major challenges identified in this year’s report:

- The escalating demands of an aging population – *the population over age 75 will increase by 75% from 2017-2032, increasing the number of those requiring more intensive health care.*
- Increased competition over a shrinking workforce – *the population under 18 will grow by only 3.5% from 2017-2032.*
- A rapidly changing environment – *hospitals have moved from paper to electronic health records in just a decade, and 75% of hospitals now provide access through telemedicine. With rapid technology changes come challenges.*
- Increased regulatory demand – *meeting regulatory demands requires 59 FTEs for an average-sized hospital; physicians and advanced practice clinicians devote more time to the electronic health record than they do face-to-face with patients.*

WHA’s 2019 Health Care Workforce Report provides a snapshot and future projections for Wisconsin’s health care labor force while describing the current environment affecting this workforce. WHA analysis, along with the expertise and experience of WHA member hospitals, offers potential solutions for health care leaders, educators and policymakers to achieve a workforce of highly skilled professionals serving patients as coordinated teams working across the continuum of care to the top of their training and experience supported by effective technology.

Key among the recommendations: state and federal policymakers must weigh any proposed regulation against the expected benefit. Even regulations proposed for a seemingly-positive purpose can instead hinder hospital and health system efforts that reflect the unique needs of their communities. Wisconsin’s health care system has evolved throughout the state via different strategies – and usually in ways that are not the result of “one size fits all” regulations.

The report is available on [WHA’s website](http://www.wha.org). WHA Vice President of Workforce and Clinical Practice Ann Zenk, RN, BSN, MHA is available for comments.