

# ABC for Health: WI uncompensated care shoots above \$1 billion, first time since 2014

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Interview: Bobby Peterson: (608) 444-7197 or Brynne McBride (608) 261-6939 ext. 210

**Madison, WI-** Uncompensated health care in Wisconsin hospitals is back over \$1 billion, as detailed by the just released “Uncompensated Health Care Report–Wisconsin Hospitals, Fiscal Year 2017.” The Report summarizes bad debt and charity care dollars from hospitals alone to be \$1.14 billion, an increase of over \$142 million over 2016. Nationally, uncompensated care for US Hospitals exceeds \$38 billion.

*[Chart of Uncompensated Care from WI Hospitals 2013-2017]*

“The political sabotage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), ever-changing program rules, red tape, and surprise medical bills combine to create health coverage barriers and increased medical debt for patients and uncompensated care for providers,” says Bobby Peterson, Executive Director of ABC for Health.

Peterson continues, “The ACA, although imperfect, provided new coverage for people that dramatically reduced uncompensated care in Wisconsin from 2013-15. Sadly, those trends reversed from 2015-17 due to myopic policy decisions from the Trump Administration and our own state capitol, segmenting insurance markets and exacerbating health care costs.” Peterson says, “Creating programs that only aim to reduce the cost of insurance, like Governor Walker’s Wisconsin Reinsurance Plan, fail to address the fundamental issue about the cost of health care and offer only short term solutions and long term pain for patients.”

“Bad debt and charity care expenses hurt financial performance, customer relations, and cause real pocketbook pain for patients affected by health disparities,” Peterson continues. “Patients overwhelmed by illness or the expense of treatment get lost in the health care bureaucracy and fail to secure coverage. Patients that are in fact eligible for programs remain unenrolled. Some health care providers and staff may lack even basic training and expertise to effectively help patients identify, optimize and navigate multiple public or private payor resources,” says Peterson.

Peterson concludes, “The high number of un- and underinsured Americans impacts the health care system, which in turn socializes uncompensated care, passing the costs onto all of us. Wisconsin can actively reduce uncompensated care by creating programs and policies that promote seamless comprehensive care and coverage for patients and includes strong consumer assistance and protection—something the current system desperately needs.”

*ABC for Health, Inc., is a Wisconsin-based, nonprofit, public interest law firm dedicated to linking children and families, particularly those with special health care needs, to health care benefits and services. ABC for Health’s mission is to provide information, advocacy tools, legal services, and expert support needed to obtain, maintain, and finance health care coverage and services.*

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