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Wisconsin Hospital Association: Hospitals, nurses and educators call on lawmakers to reject amendment gutting Nursing Workforce Data Program

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MADISON (February 20, 2018) – Wisconsin's leading hospital and nursing organizations called on Wisconsin lawmakers to reject a recently introduced amendment to Assembly Bill 903 that will move Wisconsin backwards in our ability to understand, analyze and respond to Wisconsin's critical nursing workforce needs. By collecting responses from all of Wisconsin's nursing workforce, Wisconsin's re-licensure survey program is a gold standard in the country because of its ability to accurately assess Wisconsin's nursing workforce and provide tools to predict future workforce shortage areas.

The Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA), Wisconsin Organization of Nurse Executives (WONE), Wisconsin Nurses Association (WNA), Wisconsin Board of Nursing Chair, Wisconsin Association of Nurse Anesthetists, Administrators of

Nursing Education of Wisconsin, the University of Wisconsin School of Nursing and Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative (RWHC) have all asked lawmakers to reject this amendment and protect this important workforce program. Wisconsin's educators use this data to assess the need to expand programs, adjust curriculum or apply for grants.

"The Wisconsin Hospital Association's 2016 Workforce Report used the state's nursing re-licensure data to show that 40 percent of Wisconsin's nurses plan on leaving the workforce in less than 10 years," said Eric Borgerding, President/CEO, WHA. "This is just one example of how the survey and the information it yields helps inform hospitals and public policymakers craft strategies to ensure we have enough caregivers in Wisconsin. Losing this data will make it very difficult to predict and react to looming workforce shortages and ensure adequate access to care in the future."

Nursing re-licensure survey data has been used by researchers and health care leaders as part of Wisconsin's successful bid to participate in the National Governors Association Health Workforce Policy Academy and the State Health Innovation Plan, among several others.

"Wisconsin's workforce data program informs employers and educators about how we can all prepare the future nursing leaders of our state. Workforce planning cannot be done overnight; this preparation takes deliberate action by entry-level nurses, their employers, educators and state policymakers. This strategic planning work is heavily informed by Wisconsin's nursing workforce data program," said Doreen Kluth, RN, BSN, MS and board chair, WONE.

Wisconsin lawmakers have traditionally been great partners with hospital and nursing organizations to identify and react to workforce shortages in health care. Now is not the time to reverse course. This coalition of hospital and nursing organizations strongly opposes Assembly Amendment 1 to Assembly Bill 903.

"The nursing profession, hospitals and other health care partners worked hard to pass legislation enabling our current nursing workforce survey. This important tool provides our members, educators and health care partners with critical workforce information to proactively plan for patient care needs in Wisconsin. Assembly Amendment 1 to Assembly Bill 903 will negatively impact Wisconsin's ability to respond to nursing workforce needs in a proactive way and risk the gains Wisconsin has made since this program was first enacted," stated Gina Dennik-Champion,

WNA executive director.

“Rural communities are disproportionately impacted by health care workforce shortages. Wisconsin’s nurse licensure data program has been a cornerstone of data analysis for nursing trends in Wisconsin, helping to inform rural hospitals and public policymakers about the needs that exist in our state,” said RWHC Executive Director Tim Size.