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Community Health Centers: Support safer-at-home extension, eager to implement testing

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Madison, WI – As the state ramps up testing capacity, the Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association (WPHCA) urges community members to continue abiding by the "Safer-At-Home" order extension announced by Governor Evers yesterday.

Safer-At-Home is working, and the continued vigilance of the public in following the orders to stay at home serves to protect the gains and advance the goal in ensuring the safety of the public, especially our most vulnerable residents. This sacrifice by Wisconsinites, along with a coordinated plan throughout the state to implement wide-spread testing and rapid deployment of systems to contain and isolate individuals will be imperative in slowing the growth of the pandemic and ensuring that the health care delivery system is not overwhelmed.

Health Centers recognize that to lift Safer-at-Home in whole or in part, Wisconsin needs to be able to do both widespread and targeted testing, contact tracing, and rapid isolation. Testing capacity is continuing to improve, so there is cause for optimism. There is both personal and professional urgency to getting tests to the right communities at the right times. Health Centers are eager to be partners in adopting more widespread testing as that capability becomes more widely available.

WPHCA acknowledges that the extension of the order places a large burden on the economic livelihood of communities across the state. The hardship that people are experiencing is real and Health Centers are not exempt from the financial impact. Health Centers revenues have dropped 40– 90%, depending on service line, due to reductions in in-person care and elimination of school-based care and all but

emergency dental care.

However, the continued safety of patients, staff and community members remains Health Centers' primary concern, and they will continue to implement modifications to their services in order to meet their community's needs as they continue to stay safer at home. Health Centers would appreciate a transparent, data-driven, and collaborative approach to lifting Safer-At-Home at the earliest possible opportunity.