

# WPHCA: Applauds passage of the COVID-19 response package, recognizes more action is needed to address family needs

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**Madison, WI** –The Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association, the member association for the 17 Community Health Centers in the state, applauds the bipartisan effort to pass AB1038/SB932, the COVID-19 Response Package, which will help Health Centers in Wisconsin combat the public health emergency during this time.

This legislation included important changes that will positively affect Community Health Centers and their patients as they continue to face the COVID-19 pandemic. These positive changes include:

- Paving the way for Wisconsin to receive the increase to the FMAP
- Extending credentialing and licensing flexibilities for health care providers from other states and former health care providers; allowing for the easing of administrative burdens for Medicaid providers
- Strengthening consumer protections including no cost sharing for COVID-19 testing and reimbursing out-of-network care
- Allowing Medicaid providers to receive payments for services provided in alternative settings, such as drive up lab testing
- Increasing flexibilities for prior authorization requirements and expanding options for nonemergency transportation for patients, including allowing for

food delivery to homes

- Allowing DHS to draw federal financing match for payments, such as hardship or supplemental payments.

While these changes are positive for Health Centers and health care providers around the state, the legislation lacked increased security and protections for low-income families hardest hit by the pandemic. Legislation did not include other assistance to impacted families, such as:

- **Granting funds to Covering WI for health insurance literacy and enrollment.** During this public health emergency, there has been a large increase in unemployment and furloughs. Grant funds to Covering Wisconsin would have ensured that Wisconsinites were getting the information they need, assistance to enroll in health coverage, and access to care, which would have helped lower healthcare costs and provide care for those in need.
- **Including provisions to support childcare access and affordability for health care workers and essential workers during the public health emergency.** As our health care and essential workers are supporting their communities during this pandemic, they have families that need to be cared for. Without changes, Wisconsin is not able to expend dollars or change programs to reflect the current childcare needs of these workers.
- **Expanding access to benefits including Wisconsin Shares, loan programs, cash assistance, unemployment benefits, heating assistance, and food assistance.** Health Center patients are struggling to access services designed to meet basic needs. Expanding access to benefits including Wisconsin Shares, loan programs, cash assistance, unemployment benefits, and food assistance would have ensured communities can further support these essential needs as part of the overall response to this emergency.
- **Prohibiting utility cooperatives from disconnecting customers and prohibiting landlord directed disconnections from rental units and maintaining tenant protections through the temporary ban on evictions and foreclosures** for the duration of the emergency. This would have provided housing stability for our patients. Ensuring that patients have a safe and stable place to live would have ensured that community spread is

contained.

Community Health Centers across Wisconsin are dealing with the current public health emergency while looking toward the future and how they must prepare to serve patients and families. We applaud the Legislature's actions to help Wisconsin businesses and health care workers respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a step in the right direction, but the problem we are facing is great. We encourage additional action to help all families across the state increase their economic stability, have the means to obtain assistance, and the ability to access the care they need.