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Gov. Evers, DHS: Announce Deputy Secretary Willems Van Dijk to retire

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced a transition in leadership at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). DHS Deputy Secretary Julie Willems Van Dijk, who has been a critical and visible part of the state's pandemic response efforts, will retire later this month.

"Julie's been an essential part of our state's response to the coronavirus pandemic, and it is not an overstatement to say her work and leadership have saved lives," said Gov. Evers. "Having spent 40 years dedicated to public good and the health and safety of folks in this state, Julie is the embodiment of public service. Her ability to serve with intellect and expertise while being patient, kind, and compassionate is unparalleled, frankly, and it is among the reasons she has earned the respect and admiration of so many. It has been a privilege to work alongside her on a near-daily basis over the past year and a half. I want to thank Julie for her career in public service and her family for their many years of support as well. Julie will be greatly missed, and I wish her all of the best in her retirement."

"It has been an incredible honor to serve in the role of Deputy Secretary. I am especially proud of the way our staff across DHS and all of state government came together to protect the people of Wisconsin during the COVID-19 pandemic," said Deputy Secretary Julie Willems Van Dijk. "I thank Governor Evers and Secretary-designee Timberlake for their trust and support, and after nearly 40 years of service as a nurse and public health leader, it is time that I recommit to the needs of my family."

"Julie's leadership has been invaluable across everything we do here at the Department of Health Services. She is able to see the big picture and the granular yet integral detail. She has constantly raised the bar on the quality of our work, including her dedication to data transparency and data-driven policies. I am lucky to have had the pleasure of working alongside her," said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake. "As we thank Julie for her

service, we are welcoming a new leader here at DHS. I am pleased to announce that Deb Standridge will be joining DHS as the newly-named Deputy Secretary. Deb's extensive experience in senior healthcare leadership roles, including leading Wisconsin's Alternate Care Facility earlier in the pandemic, will further strengthen our leadership team at DHS. We are excited to have her on board."

In addition to announcing Deputy Secretary Willems Van Dijk's retirement, the governor and DHS also announced Deb Standridge, who previously served as executive director of the state's alternate care facility at State Fair Park, will take over the DHS deputy secretary role. Deb Standridge has spent her career working in, improving, and leading healthcare systems, most recently serving as Regional President of the North Region of Ascension Wisconsin and Chief Executive Officer of the state's Alternate Care Facility. Her professional focus has been on the strategic direction and operational management of hospitals in a diversity of communities, including her work at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare's North Market. She is an award-winning advocate for healthcare systems and served on the Board of Directors for the Wisconsin Hospital Association.

"Deb has been a great partner to our state throughout the pandemic, running our Alternate Care Facility, which ensured folks had access to care when our hospitals were overwhelmed and helping continue a robust COVID-19 pandemic response," said Gov. Evers. "I am confident Deb will be a great addition to the administration, and we are glad to welcome her to the team."

"I want to thank Governor Evers and Secretary-designee Timberlake for this opportunity to serve our state. I know we have both challenges and opportunities ahead of us, and I am ready to get to work serving the people of Wisconsin in this new role," said Deb Standridge. "I would also like to add my gratitude to the outgoing deputy secretary. Having worked closely with Julie when I ran the Alternate Care Facility, I've seen her dedication in action. Her commitment to the health and safety of Wisconsin residents is unparalleled, and we are better for it."

Deputy Secretary Willems Van Dijk will depart DHS on September 10, 2021. Deb Standridge will begin her new role at DHS the following week.