

Gov. Evers: Announces Dept. of Health Services Secretary-designee Timberlake leaving Evers administration

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake will leave the Evers Administration on Jan. 2, 2023.

“Karen joined our administration at a critical time during the coronavirus pandemic, bringing with her a wealth of experience and expertise. We owe her our gratitude for returning to this role during an incredibly challenging time for our state, and there’s no question that she helped us save lives,” said Gov. Evers. “Even beyond her willingness to serve, Karen is an exceptional person who I’m proud to know and have been proud to have as part of my cabinet. I’m grateful for the opportunity to have served alongside her. I want to extend my sincerest thanks to Karen for her service to our state, and I wish her and her family well in their next chapter.”

Secretary-designee Timberlake previously served as secretary of DHS under Gov. Jim Doyle during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic virus response and was asked to return to service by Gov. Evers following [the resignation](#) of former DHS Secretary-designee Andrea Palm, who joined the Biden Administration in 2021. Secretary-designee Timberlake joined the administration at a pivotal time in the coronavirus pandemic, as vaccines were beginning to be distributed across the state. With her help, the state of Wisconsin saw one of the most successful vaccine rollouts in the nation, and to date, more than 10.7 million doses of vaccine have been administered across the state.

“I want to thank Governor Evers for the opportunity to step back into this role. This has been an extraordinary time to be in public service,” said Secretary-designee Timberlake. “Thanks to Gov. Evers’ leadership and the creativity and dedicated efforts of our colleagues across the cabinet and throughout the agencies, Wisconsinites and communities are bouncing back from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the state’s future is full of potential waiting to be realized.”

In addition to her leadership throughout the ongoing pandemic, during her time as secretary, Secretary-designee Timberlake has headed the state’s leading health agency during a national infant formula shortage and mpox outbreak. She has overseen efforts to expand the healthcare workforce through initiatives like the WisCaregiver Careers Program, invest in mental and behavioral health services for kids and families, especially as the state has seen increased needs due to the pandemic, and address the opioid epidemic and overdose deaths across the state.

Additionally, Secretary-designee Timberlake has worked to reduce disparities in health and make Wisconsin’s public health and healthcare systems more equitable and inclusive. These efforts included investments in telehealth services to make services more accessible, particularly in rural communities and prioritizing investments in community-based organizations that work with historically underserved and hard-to-reach communities.

Prior to her appointment by Gov. Evers in 2021, Secretary-designee Timberlake was most recently a partner at Michael Best Strategies, LLC in Wisconsin advising in areas of public health, healthcare delivery, and healthy community investments, as well as business development strategies. Prior to joining Michael Best, she was the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute Director and an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. As mentioned, Secretary-designee Timberlake also served during former Gov. Doyle’s administration as the director of the Office of State Employment Relations before being appointed as deputy secretary at DHS in mid-2007 and eventually serving as DHS secretary in April 2008, where she served for the remainder of former Gov. Doyle’s tenure.

Secretary-designee Timberlake’s replacement will be announced in the coming weeks. An online version of this release is available [here](#).