



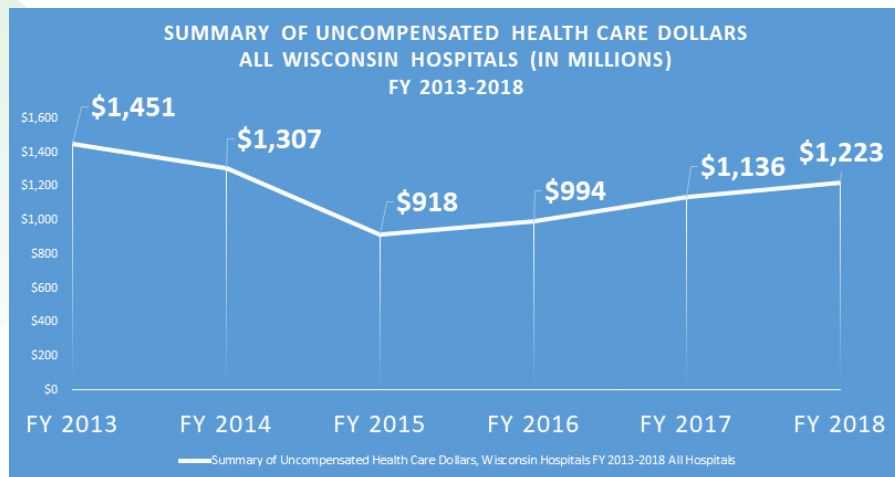
**PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Interview: Bobby Peterson: (608) 444-7197 or Brynne McBride (608) 261-6939 ext. 210

**Medical Bad Debt and Charity Care Increase in Wisconsin**

**Madison, WI-** Medical Bad Debt and Charity Care, the key elements of uncompensated health care in Wisconsin hospitals, rose by 7.6% over 2017 levels, as detailed in "[Uncompensated Health Care Report–Wisconsin Hospitals, Fiscal Year 2018.](#)" The newly-released report summarizes hospital bad debt and charity care dollars in Wisconsin that exceed \$1.2 billion, an increase of over \$86.8 million over 2017. [Nationally](#), uncompensated hospital care in the U.S. exceeds \$38.4 billion.



Data from *Uncompensated Care, WI Hospitals, 2013-18*, WHA Information Center LLC.

“People in Wisconsin face increased stress from medical debt due, in part, to the political sabotage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) by the Trump administration. Moreover, many patients lack support to confront the ever-changing program rules, red tape, and surprise medical bills that combine to create health insurance and health care barriers,” says Bobby Peterson, Public Interest Attorney of ABC for Health, Inc. Peterson continues, “Bad debt numbers are moving in the wrong direction from the reductions of 2013-15, when the ACA coverage expansions dramatically reduced uncompensated care in Wisconsin. Sadly, due to myopic policy decisions from Washington and our own state capitol from 2015-18, more people lack medical coverage for needed care.” Peterson says, “Bad debt and uncompensated care expenses hurt the bottom line for patients and hospitals, especially people affected by health disparities.” Peterson continues, “Patients overwhelmed by illness or the expense of treatment get lost in the health care bureaucracy and lose or fail to secure needed insurance and incur medical debts that could be avoided.”

Peterson concludes, “Using a successful national strategy adopted in both red and blue states, Wisconsin can reverse this trend on rising bad debt and help reduce the number of un- and underinsured Wisconsinites – many of whom are children - by expanding Medicaid for BadgerCare Plus. We need to create programs and policies that promote seamless and comprehensive health care coverage and care that includes strong consumer protections.”

*Celebrating 25 years in 2019, ABC for Health, Inc., is a Wisconsin-based, nonprofit, public interest law firm dedicated to linking children and families, particularly those with special health care needs, to health care benefits and services. ABC for Health’s mission is to provide information, advocacy tools, legal services, and expert support needed to obtain, maintain, and finance health care coverage and services.*