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WPHCA Celebrates Initiatives to Address Health Disparities and Provide Increased Health Center Support in Gov. Evers' Proposed Budget

Madison, WI – The Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association (WPHCA) appreciates the dedication from Governor Evers to address health disparities through his 2021-2023 budget proposal. As the membership organization for Wisconsin's 17 Community Health Centers, WPHCA acknowledges that Wisconsin will need an upstream investment to reduce disparities, including racial inequities. Health Centers across the state are working to advance the health of their unique communities, with a special focus on vulnerable populations and individuals with limited access to care.

Several provisions from the Governor's proposed budget address strategic priorities for Health Centers and their patients. WPHCA supports the following provisions and applauds Governor Evers for his attention to Health Centers and their patients:

- **\$2 million annual increase to the Community Health Center State Grant**, which could support nearly 32,000 dental visits to low-income residents and provide behavioral health care for 3,000 patients;
- **Expanding behavioral health and Substance Use Disorder services**, including the focus on school-based services;
- **Ensuring fair protections and ending price discrimination** for entities such as Health Centers that participate in the 340B Drug Pricing Program; and
- **Improving access to dental care** through licensing Dental Therapists and funding loan forgiveness for dentists practicing in rural areas.

WPHCA celebrates the inclusion of the following equity initiatives in the Governor's proposed budget:

- **Community Reinvestment Fund** providing equity grants to support groups working to promote diversity and advance equity and inclusion;
- **Broadband investment** and infrastructure expansion to ensure all Wisconsin residents have access to affordable high-speed internet which is a key factor for effectively deploying telehealth;
- **Healthy Moms Healthy Babies provisions**, including expanding Medicaid coverage to pregnant women one year post-partum (current coverage is 60 days);
- **Childcare initiatives** that would afford families new options for early childhood education;
- **Community-based equity initiatives** including recognizing the value of Community Health Worker models; and
- **Community Health Benefit Waiver** addressing social determinants of health such as housing and food insecurity with services delivered by culturally competent organizations.

The Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association greatly appreciates the Governor's dedication to addressing long-standing health disparities in his 2021-2023 budget proposal. WPHCA also recognizes the unprecedented challenges our state faces moving into budget deliberations. We look forward to engaging with the Wisconsin legislature throughout the budget process to share insights regarding proposals and their impacts on our member Health Centers and the patients they serve.

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