

NEWS

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Health Care Providers, Purchasers Back Walker's Quality Improvement Act

MADISON (January 5, 2011) --- Wisconsin health care and business leaders are joining forces to back a provision in Governor Scott Walker's special session package that will improve the quality and value of health care in the Badger State.

The Health Care Quality Improvement Act (QIA) will put Wisconsin at the forefront of the patient safety and quality improvement movement, leading to better outcomes for patients and better health care value for employers and employees.

Under the proposal, health care providers will be able to study and improve practices and, importantly, share what they learn with others without fear of those findings being used against them in a lawsuit. These changes will bolster the work of organizations, including the state's regulatory agencies, that work to improve patient safety and health care quality.

Wisconsin's current "peer review" laws were largely enacted in the 1970s and have fallen far behind modern, integrated approaches to delivering health care. The QIA will encourage broader participation in quality reviews by health care practitioners and professionals. Walker's legislation will also accelerate important collaborative efforts that will improve patient outcomes.

The QIA encourages this activity by:

- Strengthening, clarifying, or providing protections against the use of quality improvement investigations and conclusions.
- Protecting health care providers who openly and honestly aid regulatory agencies in their good work.
- Maintaining unintentional medical errors as a matter for civil, not criminal, courts.

"The QIA is an essential element of a special session focused on jobs because employers want the kind of high quality health care that is the byproduct of ongoing and future efforts to constantly improve clinical care. This is really about value for dollars used to purchase health care. Wisconsin is already a high value health care state and this legislation will allow us to accelerate our performance improvement efforts."



Stephen F. Brenton, President and CEO, Wisconsin Hospital Association



WMC
WISCONSIN'S BUSINESS VOICE

"WMC strongly supports the QIA because we believe it will help Wisconsin providers become more cost-efficient and improve the quality of the care delivered, increasing the overall value of the health care employers and employees purchase."

*James Buchen, Vice President of Government Relations,
Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce*

"The Wisconsin Collaborative for Healthcare Quality is built around collaborative learning and sharing to drive healthcare improvement. Our experience has demonstrated that sharing among organizations leads to higher quality patient care. WCHQ fully supports a change in the peer review laws to make it possible for an even greater level of sharing to improve the value of health care in our state."



Christopher Queram, President/CEO, Wisconsin Collaborative for Healthcare Quality



Aurora Health Care

“Robust quality improvement in health care is more important than ever and our peer review laws must keep pace with the way modern care is delivered. Wisconsin is fortunate to have integrated health systems, hospitals and clinics eager to work internally and with each other to research and improve practices. We must encourage this collaboration and enable more public reporting of quality and safety data by promoting transparency and cooperation with regulators. This is the best way to improve patient safety and outcomes.”

Nick Turkal, MD, President and CEO, Aurora Health Care

“As small business owners continue their struggle with the high cost of health care, the Quality Improvement Act is an important step in efforts to make their health care dollars go farther and increase the value of health care delivered for all.”



Bill Smith, State Director, NFIB Wisconsin



Dean
CLINIC

“Instead of being afraid of sharing best practices, the Quality Improvement Act will encourage practitioners to exchange the vital information necessary for continuous learning and the advancement of quality and safety in health care.”

Dr. Craig Samitt, President and CEO, Dean Clinic

“As an integrated system of care, Gundersen Lutheran relies on collaboration and sharing of information to drive quality improvement in all aspects of the health care delivery system. We will continue to try to transform health care, but our state’s regulations have not kept up with the innovations. It’s time to bring the quality improvement regulations in line with the current health care delivery environment.”



Dr. Jeff Thompson, CEO, Gundersen Lutheran Health System

Luther Midelfort

Mayo Health System

“Luther Midelfort, Mayo Health System supports the proposed changes to the peer review statute. We strongly believe in the multi-disciplinary review of care in order to improve the delivery of care. Integrated hospital/clinic systems such as those in Mayo Health System engage several disciplines and levels of the organization to come together to provide a seamless model of care to the patient and an opportunity to review that care for improvement. These proposed changes align with this model of improvement and create an environment that fosters it.”

Andra J. Palmer, JD, Legal Counsel, Luther Midelfort, Mayo Health System

“Wisconsin health care leads the country in quality. But rural physicians provide good care not due to our peer review laws, but in spite of them. The Quality Improvement Act will allow all of us to further collaborate to provide the best care possible.”



Tim Size, Executive Director, Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative



Marshfield Clinic

“Marshfield Clinic strongly supports the Quality Improvement Act. Enhancing the public reporting of health outcomes will lead to quality improvement in health care, population health management, chronic disease care, and health care cost control. Quality improvement legislation that meets these goals also encourages collaborative work between and among health care organizations that will produce a healthier workforce and drive a rejuvenated Wisconsin economy.”

Karl J. Ulrich, M.D., CEO Marshfield Clinic

“Physicians are dedicated to improving health care quality; one important way to accomplish this is by allowing full and frank investigations. Current law doesn’t promote this kind of work; the Quality Improvement Act will allow Wisconsin to further enhance its status as having the nation’s highest-quality health care.”



Dr. Thomas Luetzow, President, Wisconsin Medical Society



MINISTRY HEALTH CARE

“Our employees want to do more to assess patient care – working collaboratively across departments and provider types to determine the best and most efficient care. While Wisconsin leads the country in the delivery of high quality health care, this law will support our efforts to do even more to improve the care we provide our patients.”

Nick Desien, President and CEO, Ministry Health Care



“Many times processes are designed with inadvertent risk of human error. Problem solving can only be accomplished if we have clear communication about what may have caused an error. If there is fear of retribution, this process cannot be successful. Instead of being afraid of sharing best practices, the Quality Improvement Act will encourage providers to exchange vital information necessary for continuous learning and the advancement of higher quality and lower cost health care.”

Dr. Mark Hermans, Vice President Medical Affairs, ThedaCare

“We want Wisconsin’s long term care providers to be able to focus on their continuing commitment to improving clinical outcomes and quality of life for their residents, and to worry less about the negative consequences they may face by aggressively pursuing that commitment. The Quality Improvement Act will foster greater collaboration, candid exchange of ideas and productive analysis of opportunities for improvement that will translate into higher quality of care for Wisconsin’s elders.”



Thomas P. Moore, Executive Director, Wisconsin Health Care Association/Wisconsin Center for Assisted Living



“The important work of the health care quality improvement professionals, including at the state’s regulatory agencies, relies on candid reports from practitioners. This bill protects the good work of these professionals and their organizations, encouraging cooperation among the groups focused on patient safety and care quality. With these improvements, our patients can have even more confidence in the state’s system of peer review.”

William D. Petasnick, President and CEO, Froedtert Health

“Quality improvement experts have long held that systemic and comprehensive improvement efforts are accelerated by an open and honest assessment of existing care and service delivery systems. The Quality Improvement Act will fuel more innovative and life-enriching quality improvements within our long term care system as organizations will more freely exchange ideas and solutions to today’s care giving challenges.”



John Sauer, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (WAHSA)



“Nurse Anesthetists support the QIA because they are committed to providing the best patient care and believe that sharing quality information benefits all.”

Jim Albrecht, CRNA, MS, APNP, President-Elect, Wisconsin Association of Nurse Anesthetists

“Quality improvement is an essential component of the Patient Centered Medical Home. Family physicians across the state have been transforming their practices to provide comprehensive care with a whole-person orientation in a family and community context that focuses on a continuous healing relationship. The ability to share information and best practices as provided in the Quality Improvement Act will help Patient Centered Medical Homes improve patient outcomes and reduce overall health care costs.”



Corazon Loteyro, MD, President, Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians



“Nurses in Wisconsin need to be assured that they can practice to the best of their ability and worry less about an inadvertent error turning into a criminal complaint.”

Gina Dennik-Champion, Executive Director, RN, MSN, MSHA, Wisconsin Nurses Association

“Quality improvement practices have become more sophisticated over the last few years. Through collaborative research and sharing best practices, Wisconsin health care providers can make great strides toward improving patient outcomes. Improved patient outcomes are best for patients, health care purchasers and for the state as a whole.”



Donna Katen-Bahensky, President and CEO, UW Hospitals and Clinics



“The Quality Improvement Act will help us work to improve quality, patient outcomes and the efficiency of health care delivery, thus increasing the value of the health care dollars invested by patients, employers and other purchasers. Through the QIA, providers will be encouraged to build upon Wisconsin’s already high value health care.”

Mary Starmann-Harrison, President and CEO, SSM Health Care of Wisconsin