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PRESS RELEASE

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Interview: Bobby Peterson: 608-440-8405

Medical Debt is Crushing Wisconsin Patients

Madison, WI – Uncompensated care in Wisconsin hospitals skyrocketed to \$1.8 billion in 2024, a 28.6% increase over 2023 and the largest increase in decades. The Wisconsin Hospital Association released the latest “[Uncompensated Health Care Report, Wisconsin Hospitals Fiscal Year 2024](#).” The report identifies a dramatic increase in overall hospital uncompensated care, a measure that combines both charity care and bad debt totals. In 2023, uncompensated care totaled \$1.4 billion. Bad debt for Wisconsin hospitals jumped by over 32% compared to 2023. Charity care services provided increased more than 28% over 2023.

“Medical debt is a crisis in Wisconsin and a mounting burden for patients and families,” says Bobby Peterson, Public Interest Attorney at ABC for Health, Inc. “The federal budget, coupled with recent Administrative Rules and Executive Orders, creates dramatic changes to health coverage options now and into the future. Yet under the law, hospitals have both a legal and moral obligation to help protect patients from coverage gaps, denied care, increased hospitalizations, medical debt, and worsened health amid a changing health insurance landscape.”

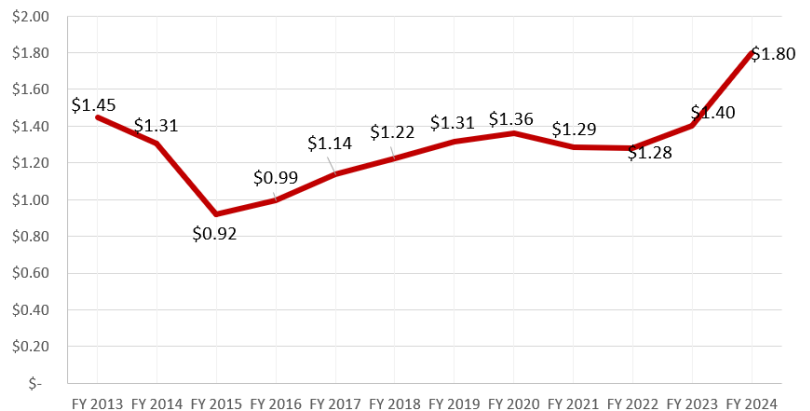
Peterson says, “Recent reports quantify the dire consequence of so many people losing insurance, including delayed care, increased hospitalizations, and increased deaths. In anticipation of more trouble ahead, Wisconsin legislators and the Governor responded to patient and hospital needs by enacting a last-minute provider rate increase through a provider assessment (from 1.8% to 6%) when Gov. Evers signed the 2025-2027 state budget into law.” The state will draw down additional federal matching funds to significantly increase support for hospitals through Medicaid for a combined total of over \$1 billion dollars. “With additional revenue, now hospitals must step up to meet their legal requirements to help their most vulnerable patients, through improved patient screening for Medicaid and insurance options, pro-active financial assistance, and decreased collection and credit reporting of medical debt,” continues Peterson.

Hospitals must choose a path forward that both helps patients and supports communities. ABC for Health says the message to Wisconsin hospitals is clear: “Simplify the process for vulnerable patients.” So many patients’ medical debts are avoidable. Proactive hospitals can prevent substantial debts through informed patient financial assistance programs and better practices coupled with knowledgeable and informed staff. Only then can more patients have access to the care and financial security they need and deserve, especially in uncertain times.

ABC for Health has its “[Fighting Forward: Challenging Medical Debt](#)” resource for consumers on its website.

ABC for Health, Inc., is a Wisconsin-based, nonprofit, public interest law firm that provides information, advocacy tools, legal services, and expert support needed to obtain, maintain, and finance health care coverage and services.

Summary of Uncompensated Health Care Dollars All Wisconsin Hospitals FY 2013-2024 (in Billions)



Data from *Uncompensated Care, WI Hospitals Reports* spanning FY 2013-2024, WHA Information Center LLC

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