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For Immediate Release

Contact: Richelle Andrae
608-571-6168

Assembly Health Committee to Hold Hearing on Dental Therapy and Other Oral Health Priorities Supported by Community Health Centers

Madison, WI – The Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association (WPHCA) celebrates the introduction of multiple bills aimed at improving oral health care which are scheduled for a hearing at the Assembly Committee on Health, Aging, and Long-Term Care on Wednesday, November 15. WPHCA is the member association for Wisconsin's 19 Community Health Centers which provided oral health, primary care, and behavioral health services to nearly 300,000 Wisconsinites in 2022. Over one-third of the visits at Community Health Centers last year were dental visits. Clinics around the state are dedicated to addressing oral health access gaps and improving oral health for both children and adults.

WPHCA in particular supports the re-introduction of Dental Therapy, [Assembly Bill 668](#), and recently published a new [Dental Therapy Issue Brief](#) highlighting the need to authorize practice by this provider in Wisconsin. Despite steps by Community Health Centers, private practice Dentists, hospitals, and others, the issue brief highlights concerning data on Medicaid-enrollee oral health access and outcomes in 2022:

- Less than 40% of Medicaid-enrolled children received any dental services
- Less than one-third of Medicaid members received an oral health exam or preventative services
- More than half of zip codes in Wisconsin have no licensed Dentist

This bill, along with others addressing the need to train more oral health providers and facilitating licensing, will help each oral health team member increase efficiency, work at the top of their training and skillset, and ultimately improve oral health care for high-need communities. "Access to oral health care has always been a top priority for Community Health Centers," said Stephanie Harrison, CEO of WPHCA. "We are confident that trained, licensed Dental Therapists will be a valuable addition to Health Centers, helping to increase access to oral health care, particularly in low-income communities. We are appreciative of Senator Felzkowski and Representative Plumer's leadership on this issue, and for the cross-sector support for Dental Therapy in Wisconsin."

Dental Therapy is supported by over [30 organizations in Wisconsin](#). Community Health Centers provide high-quality oral health care to patients regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. 70% of Community Health Center patients live at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, which is \$30,000 for a family of four. Please visit wphca.org to find a Community Health Center near you.

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WPHCA is the member association for Wisconsin's 19 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs, or Community Health Centers). Community Health Centers are non-profit, community-directed medical, dental, and behavioral health clinics.