**Medicaid Reimbursement for Emergency Physicians | Spring 2021**

Wisconsin Emergency Physicians provide treatment and care for all emergency patients 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Bound by federal EMTALA law, we evaluate and stabilize patients regardless of their ability to pay. Hence, all emergency physicians have 100% active participation in Medicaid and on average provide almost $150,000 in charity care per physician every year. Emergency Medicine is unique in this regard. As frontline caregivers and the only medical professionals always open for the public we have served our communities during the COVID pandemic and will continue as the safety net for Wisconsin’s healthcare system, including for patients with mental health crises and opiate addiction.

The 2019-21 biennial budget included Medicaid rate increases for physicians and certain behavioral health providers. This resulted in a six percent increase for “Problem Focused and Preventive” evaluation and management (E&M) codes and a 33 percent increase for selected reimbursement services for psychiatrists. These were important and necessary rate increases to preserve and improve access to services for Medicaid members. However, reimbursement for emergency care was not addressed despite being the lowest in the nation.

Currently in Wisconsin, Emergency Physicians are reimbursed at 1/3 the Medicaid rate of neighboring states. Our payment rate to treat a Medicaid enrollee patient who has suffered a serious motor vehicle crash, or a drug overdose, is only $27. In fact, current reimbursement rates only cover approximately 40% of the cost of providing care.

Nearly half of Wisconsin Chapter of Emergency College of Emergency Physicians (WACEP) members are in an independent group practice. These emergency physicians are not hospital employees and therefore bill Medicaid directly. ED physicians have a very portable practice and can easily relocate to another state. Our current reimbursement rates for emergency physicians are so poor that they threaten our state’s ability to recruit and retain emergency physicians.

We strongly support the MA funding increase for emergency physician services contained in the Governor’s executive budget. The projected $1.9m General Purpose Revenue (GPR) and $5.2m All Funds increase would bring Wisconsin’s Medicaid rates for emergency physicians from 25% up to 50% of Medicare rates. With the proposed rate increase, Wisconsin will move from last to only 45th in the nation in reimbursement, and Emergency Physicians will still trail far behind groups like primary care physicians (who are reimbursed at over 75% of Medicare). However, this is still a very important step in the right direction.

As you consider budgetary needs during these unprecedented times, it is vital to include an increase to Medicaid rates for Emergency Physicians. Our historic goal was and continues to be parity with federal Medicare rates. Even if that specific amount may not be attainable at this moment, a substantial increase is nevertheless requested and desperately needed.

Thank you again for your support and continued consideration.