



TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Judiciary and Ethics
Representative Jim Ott, Chair

FROM: Jeremy Levin, Director of Advocacy
Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative

DATE: January 10, 2011

RE: **SUPPORT** January 2011 Special Session Assembly Bill 1 – Health Care Quality Improvement Act

The Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative (RWHC) wants to thank you for holding a hearing on the January 2011 Special Session Assembly Bill 1, which contains the Health Care Quality Improvement Act. RWHC is a network with 35 Wisconsin hospital members that aims to provide leadership on rural health issues. RWHC works to achieve the goal that rural Wisconsin communities will be the healthiest in America.

The Health Care Quality Improvement Act (QIA) is legislation that has been previously proposed, received wide bipartisan support and its time has more than come to pass. The health care system relies on robust quality improvement activities, such as review, study and evaluation of health care providers and services, or “peer review” as it is commonly known, which allows providers to analyze and improve health care quality and avoid improper utilization. The QIA addresses concerns health care organizations have about sharing quality improvement data within and amongst health care organizations that case law has allowed open to legal discovery.

The QIA **will not** prevent a plaintiff’s attorney from conducting an investigation in a civil proceeding or stop law enforcement from interviewing people or obtaining original records in a criminal proceeding. However, QIA will allow health care organizations in Wisconsin the ability to continue needed quality improvements for patient care and safety by allowing an unfettered review of health care services without worrying the evaluation of the records might be misinterpreted for legal action. In a time when both the Legislature and the public are demanding more transparency and disclosure within the health care field, as well as everyone’s desire to continue to advance quality, safety and accessibility for health care in Wisconsin, removing barriers to sharing of information and data which contributes to these priorities is in everyone’s best interests.

Wisconsin’s rural hospitals are strongly committed to improving patient safety as we provide quality and patient-centered care. RWHC asks the committee members to **SUPPORT** January 2011 Special Session Assembly Bill 1, which contains the Health Care Quality Improvement Act. The RWHC believes, now more than ever, that the challenges facing health care do not need to be further complicated by provisions that hamper quality and patient safety improvement.