



WISCONSIN
CITIZEN ACTION



October 16, 2003

Members of the Wisconsin United for Health Foundation
C/o Chuck Henderson
10 E. Doty, Suite 600
Madison, WI 53703

Re: Response to October 8th Meeting

Dear Wisconsin United for Health Board Members:

Without burdening you with another lengthy memo, with this letter we would like to respond to your most recent meeting on October 8th. We appreciate the integrity and conscientiousness with which you are carrying out your duties as WUHF board members to fulfill your responsibility to as specified by the Insurance Commissioner's Order. That document has a deliberately elongated process with appropriate checks and balances designed to ensure that the highest and most appropriate use of the scarce public health funds are ensured.

Despite the protests from President Bolger and Dean Farrell, we agree that the WUHF Board is in fact responsible for ensuring "accountability for [the] distribution of funds" (ICO, 22). The order states that "[t]he foundation shall accept revised plans submitted by the UW Foundation/ UWMS and the MCW...*unless the Board determines that the plans have not been revised to the extent necessary to comply with the standards specified under this order...*"(ICO, 22, emphasis added). Thus, as long as it is your belief (as it is ours) that the schools' plans do not comply with the order you are obliged not to accept the plans and not to distribute the funds.

While we respectfully disagree with the WUHF Board's conclusion that it would not be feasible to use some of the conversion funds to find a systemic solution to our health care crisis, we appreciate the careful and objective consideration the board gave the idea. We would like to reiterate here that improving access to healthcare services and ensuring that the medical schools follow the Commissioner's Order regarding acceptable expenditures remain our top priorities in this process. We are heartened to see that you share these priorities.

As you continue in your thoughtful deliberations, please keep the following in mind:

- 1) ***The medical schools' plans still include funding for bricks and mortar.*** The following is from the MCW Plan: "The development of a clinical skills training center will provide a consolidated program and facility for their training. The center will include standard exam rooms, procedure rooms and a patient simulation area for training" (p. 31). And this, from the UWMS Plan: "The new 24-room Teaching and Assessment Center will allow students to demonstrate their skills in examining and communicating with patients through the standardized patient assessment program" (p. 22).

- 2) ***MCW's plan still includes funding for their library services, faculty development, and scholarships.*** (See MCW pp.31-32) This, too, is clearly about boosting MCW's standing as a medical school not improving the public health of Wisconsin.
- 3) ***Even if you believe this money cannot solve our health care crisis, the fact that we are in a severe health care crisis means that we need all the dollars available for public health to actually be spent on public health, not feathering the nest of the medical schools and funding their pet projects or supplanting funds that may be available from other sources.*** The medical schools are simply ignoring provisions in the Commissioner's Order that specify that ***all*** the conversion funds need to be spent on public health (ICO, p.9) and charging the medical schools as *stewards* of these funds. Contrary to their assertion, not all activities of the medical school are inherently in the interest of public health, as defined by the Commissioner's order (ICO, p.29).
- 4) ***The medical schools' have already breached the "trust" they seek.*** By already trying to fund one major medical school building with these scarce public health funds, Dean Farrell of the UW Medical School dramatically illustrated that he cannot be trusted. Meanwhile, the Medical College of Wisconsin is seeking to use these precious public funds for library services, faculty development, and scholarships, although their school recorded excess revenues of \$17 million last year on an annual budget of over \$400 million dollars! As mentioned above, there are still plans to spend money on bricks and mortar in both the medical school plans in spite of the general public and WUHF making it abundantly clear that such expenditures did not pass the smell test. There is simply an inherent conflict of interest between the mission of Medical School oversight committees and that of the medical schools. Having the Dean and President of the respective medical schools as Chairs of the committees only highlights this conflict further.

Thank you for your careful consideration and thoughtful deliberations on how to best use these funds for the people of Wisconsin into perpetuity. Your decisions on the use of these funds will no doubt have a lasting effect on future generations of our fellow residents.

Sincerely,

Darcy Haber
Wisconsin Citizen Action

Bobby Peterson
ABC for Health