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Testimony on Senate Bill 391 Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

November 20, 2013

I would like to thank the members of the Senate Health Committee for holding a hearing on Senate Bill 391, and Senator Vukmir for her leadership on this important issue. I apologize that I am unable to attend the public hearing in person.

Under current law, health care providers who offer their services under the umbrella of a non-profit organization that is not based in Wisconsin are barred from volunteering in our state. Senate Bill 391 allows these individuals to follow the same application and permitting process as those who volunteer for in-state non-profits, and prohibits the Department of Administration from denying an application solely on the location of the non-profit organization.

Currently, health care providers who offer charity care in Wisconsin are considered agents of the state for liability purposes. Under Senate Bill 391, any volunteer providers offering care are required to show proof of liability insurance as well as proof of licensure, and as such would not be considered agents of the state.

Senate Bill 391 is modeled after the Volunteer Health Care Services Act, first enacted by the State of Tennessee. This legislation allows licensed out-of-state healthcare providers affiliated with non-profit organizations such as Remote Area Medical and the National Association of Free Clinics, to come to Wisconsin and offer care to some of our most vulnerable citizens.

As an emergency room physician, I see individuals whose emergency room visit could have been prevented if they had access to the type of charity care addressed in this proposal.

Thank you again Senator Vukmir and members for holding this public hearing and I look forward to working with you on the passage of this legislation.