



# Wisconsin Medical Society

Your Doctor. Your Health.

TO: Joint Legislative Audit Committee  
Senator Kathleen Vinehout & Representative Peter Barca, Chairs

FROM: Tim Bartholow, MD – Senior Vice President

DATE: January 13, 2010

RE: Support for Proposed Audit: Medical Assistance Program

On behalf of nearly 12,500 members statewide, the Wisconsin Medical Society thanks you for this opportunity to share our support for an audit of the state's Medical Assistance Program (MA or Medicaid). We urge the Committee to make such a recommendation, as a greater analysis of the program may help policymakers find a path for greater MA efficiency and sustainability.

The Society has growing concerns about the state's Medicaid program as enrollment increases continue alongside strained funding sources and burgeoning deficits. While we understand the difficulties in providing full government services during extraordinarily negative economic times, we also believe Medicaid is one of the government's most critical programs, as it provides health care to our poorest and sickest citizens. Therefore, an audit could help shed more light on who is being covered, what health care is being provided and where money is being spent to sustain the program. In particular, we are very concerned about how many primary care givers are available to these vulnerable patients and frankly for all citizens.

Such an audit would come at an opportune time. The Society more often is hearing stories of decreased patient access to Medicaid services, via an inadequate number of clinics (especially in the Milwaukee area as well as rural parts of the state) and fewer physicians able to see Medicaid patients due to woeful government reimbursement that fails to meet even the cost of providing that care. These anecdotes are troubling; so too is a projected Medicaid program deficit of \$1 billion next biennium.

As the Congress puts the finishing touches on a national health care reform plan, it appears that government-funded programs like Medicaid will expand further, putting the state's ability to fund existing benefits even more into question. A rigorous examination of the current program through an audit may not make coverage and affordability decisions for policymakers any simpler, but it would certainly make those decisions better-informed.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide the Society's opinions on a proposed audit of the state's Medical Assistance program. The Society stands ready to continue collaborations with the state's policymakers on enhancing Wisconsin's health care system.