



## **Testimony: Audit Report 15-4: Non-Emergency Medical Transportation**

Thank you Co-chair Cowles and Co-chair Kerkman and members of the Joint Audit Committee for requesting this audit and for the opportunity to comment on the final report. I also want to thank the team at LAB for their diligent work to gather and compile the data on this complicated program. Congratulations on your 50 year history of high quality and unbiased work.

The data within the report quantifies many of the stories advocates have been hearing from across the state by affected members, families and providers. The recommendations address some complaint procedure issues and begins to address some policies within the program. While these can lead to some improvement within the current system structure, the data points to other systemic problems.

The payment to the broker has increased by \$11.7 million dollars since 2009. This increase is despite providers getting 4.7% less in reimbursement (pg. 23) and other providers of MA transportation like Specialized Medical Vehicles, nursing homes and Family Care MCOs seeing no increase in reimbursement since the early 90s. Unlike the broker, these MA providers only get reimbursed once they provide an actual ride. The broker gets paid regardless of the number of rides provided thereby incentivizing denial of rides (pg. 15). How will the state rectify these inequities for the provision of NEMT and instead incentivize the provision of rides?

Wisconsin has a history of strong provider networks that rely on coordination and reasonable distribution of rides. The report indicates only 10 of the 244 contracted providers in the state account for nearly 40% of the rides by the broker (pg. 24) and over half of all providers responding are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the program (pg. 69). These are the providers the community relies on for all transportation needs. They are the ones seeing the individual, escorting them to their appointments, developing the relationships that prevent system abuse and increase natural supports for these individuals, especially in highly rural areas. The operating model of the brokerage has disrupted the state's transportation system, not only for MA members, but anyone needing transportation including nursing home residents on MA and Family Care members who do not get their rides through the broker. If the broker is having problems securing rides in areas like Bayfield, Florence and Iron Counties (pg. 74), imagine the difficulties of anyone else trying to get a ride to a medical appointment or to work or shopping. How will our provider network be kept from deteriorating further and remain strong for anyone needing transportation throughout the state?

Oversight by DHS has improved since the implementation of the program as evidenced by the analysis of complaint rulings changed by DHS (pg. 50), however the vendor remains non-compliant on timeliness of resolving complaints. (pg. 44). The LAB finding that some complaints were substantiated despite insufficient evidence (pg. 48) highlights the need for a true third party transportation advocate. What steps will be taken to ensure 3<sup>rd</sup> party objective oversight that gives members a place to be heard and helped and gathers feedback for continual program improvement?

If you are left stranded away from home even once, how likely are you to continue relying on the transportation service that got you there? One quarter of survey respondents indicated they were not

picked up from their appointment at least once. It is no wonder that of respondents, almost 7% discontinued using the program (pg. 64). How do we address the lack of reliability and customer confidence in this program that ends up resulting in people using other tax funded programs or just not seeking medical help they need?

Ultimately, this program is about ensuring health outcomes by providing the Federally-required access to Medicaid services. We hope to continue to engage with DHS and the legislature to improve this program. Transportation is complex and the report reflects some of those complexities. It provides excellent data about some of the issues we know are happening, but we must remember that each transportation provider is a WI business and each of those numbers, each trip leg, each ride is a person.

Thank you,

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