



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Wellness Council of Wisconsin Separates from Long-Time Affiliate in Celebration of Independence *Presented by the Wellness Council of Wisconsin (WCWI)*

WCWI'S FOUNDING ROOTS

Over 35 years ago, the Wellness Council of Wisconsin's (WCWI's) statewide community was created from a notion that was connected – but separate – to Bill Kizer's work in starting WELLCOM and WELCOA. WCWI's rich history in Wisconsin began when Lynn Bardele, then the Manager of Personnel Relations for Northwestern Mutual, met Bill Kizer at a national meeting of the Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA) held in Milwaukee. Bill told Lynn about an organization for businesses interested in worksite health promotion that he had helped to create in Omaha called the Wellness Council of the Midlands (WELLCOM). With that conversation, Lynn initiated the Milwaukee Wellness Council with the commitment of [nine founding organizations](#) in the Milwaukee area. Over time the Milwaukee Wellness Council grew to become the Wellness Council of Wisconsin, and we joined WELCOA as an affiliated organization.

WCWI has the opportunity to be a guide for [our members](#) as we supported designing impactful employee wellbeing strategies with the use of WCWI's membership and WELCOA's membership. Through our long-standing connection with WELCOA, WCWI's team has elevated over 600 Wisconsin organizations on a national scale by providing local support alongside them, advocating for them in their efforts to receive WELCOA's national recognition opportunities, and providing training and consultative partnership for programs and strategies.

WCWI is steadfast in our dedication to our Wisconsin employer members and the wellbeing strategists and people leaders doing this work. Our aim has been, and always will be, supporting their success through a highly-connected membership that remains high-value and affordable.

WCWI'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

As our organization's strategic priorities continue to focus on delivering impact for Wisconsin's communities and statewide workforce, through careful consideration with WCWI's Board of Directors and staff leadership, WCWI has decided not to renew the licensing agreement as an affiliate with WELCOA. In 2022 and onward, WCWI will operate as an independent, financially strong organization servicing only the WCWI membership experience.

WCWI has made the decision to move forward autonomously because:

1. WELCOA has **almost doubled their affiliation costs** in order for WCWI to maintain an affiliation into 2022 and beyond. The rise in affiliation fees would require WCWI to significantly change our expense allocation and increase membership costs to continue to provide the dual membership. The financial impact would be detrimental to our members and to the viability of our organization.
2. WCWI is committed to continued evolution of our high-quality and unique service to WCWI members through expansion of our membership benefits. We have continuously sought feedback on the WCWI member

experience to ensure our services meet member needs. Ending the licensing agreement **opens opportunities for WCWI to put our full focus toward continuing to provide the experiences** that are a cornerstone of WCWI's membership – connecting hundreds of members with networking, learning, training, and local high-touch support.

3. With the best interest of our members in mind, WCWI Board of Directors and staff throughout the years have made **intentional efforts to be a financially strong and independent organization** so we could ensure that our service and community remained a pillar of support for Wisconsin organizations. This goal is something that we're proud to achieve today! As we move forward, we commit to continued financial strength and independent operations that will provide value to Wisconsin employers, just as you've been accustomed to. We are excited to move into this next chapter with you.

WCWI'S MEMBERSHIP

WCWI has made momentous advancements within our membership experience, employee wellbeing resources, and professional development trainings over the years, all driven by WCWI Member feedback and industry needs. The following WCWI experiences have been created and operated solely by WCWI:

- [WCWI's Coach-Approach Consultations](#)
- [WCWI's Well Practices](#)
- [WCWI's Webinar and Enrichment Sessions](#)
- [WCWI's Data Center: Statewide Surveys and Polls](#)
- [WCWI's Members-Only Networking: Member Resource Groups, In-Person Events, and One-on-One Connections](#)
- [WCWI's Annual Employee Wellbeing Conference + Pre-Conference](#)
- [WCWI's TECH Group](#)
- [WCWI's Learning Circles](#)
- [WCWI's Podcast: Changing the Narrative of Employee Wellbeing](#)

WCWI'S COMMITMENT TO REMAIN WISCONSIN'S PREMIER RESOURCE

We embark on this next phase with optimism and excitement! WCWI is a close, connected, and transformative community of employers and professionals in Wisconsin.

With WCWI's intention to focus our goals on supporting our members and bringing needed experiences and training to our statewide employers, it became clear that a continued licensing agreement with WELCOA would impact our ability to grow and improve the WCWI experiences that are the cornerstones of the membership in Wisconsin: connecting hundreds of members with networking, learning, training, and the premier high-touch local support of the WCWI staff.

This decision was made due to the changing goals of each organization, WCWI and WELCOA, and we believe it is in the best interest of WCWI and our members. WCWI commits to carry forward our legacy as a service-oriented, relationship-focused leading advocate of employee wellbeing, serving Wisconsin's employers and professionals.

We extend appreciation to each of our WCWI Members, sponsors, and partners for their dedicated engagement in WCWI. Thank you for being with us and for staying with us. It's an honor to be your partner in professional growth and wellbeing leadership.

[Preview the 2022 WCWI Membership Experience and design your growth plan as a people leader.](#)

[View WCWI's Impact: A Year In Review](#)