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November 12th, 2026

Senator Cabral-Guevara, Chair
Representative Neylon, Vice-chair
Members of the Study Committee on the Use of AI in Healthcare

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback today on your proposal to create a Wisconsin Office of AI Policy.

I am Patrick McDaniel, the Tsun-Ming Shih Professor of Computer Sciences and the inaugural Associate Dean for Research in the new College of Computing & Artificial Intelligence at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

I have spent much of my career conducting research at the intersection of artificial intelligence and cybersecurity. During that time, I have witnessed firsthand the remarkable evolution of AI, while working with the research community and federal government to understand its opportunities and challenges. For the past seven years, I have led the NSF Center for Trustworthy Machine Learning, a multi-institutional research center focused on the security, reliability, and trustworthiness of AI. I also co-authored a 2020 report for the National Science and Technology Council examining the opportunities and challenges of AI and cybersecurity, helping inform national research priorities.

From that perspective, it is undeniable that we are at an extraordinary moment in the development of artificial intelligence.

AI is advancing at a remarkable pace, creating capabilities that were difficult to imagine just a few years ago. These technologies promise to transform how we work, learn, discover, and solve problems. They offer opportunities to accelerate scientific discovery, improve productivity, expand access to knowledge, and address challenges that have resisted traditional approaches.

But with these opportunities come risks. AI systems can make mistakes, produce convincing but incorrect information, expose sensitive data, and fail in ways that are difficult to anticipate. These challenges are real, but they are not reasons to turn away from the technology. Rather, they underscore the importance of understanding its limitations, evaluating its performance, and applying appropriate safeguards.

Nowhere is this balance more important than in health care, where AI has the potential to fundamentally improve how medical knowledge is developed, accessed, and applied.

For physicians, AI can help synthesize complex medical information, support diagnosis, and inform treatment decisions. For nurses, it can reduce administrative burdens and make relevant patient information more accessible. For pharmacists, it can help identify drug interactions, optimize medication management, and improve patient safety. And for patients, AI can make health information more understandable, support more informed decisions, and expand access to care.

The promise is not simply greater efficiency. It is better-informed health care professionals, more knowledgeable and engaged patients, and ultimately better health outcomes.

Realizing this promise will require more than technological innovation. It will require the knowledge to understand what AI can and cannot do, the expertise to evaluate its risks, and the judgment to apply it responsibly. And the urgency is real. AI is already entering our health care systems, and its capabilities are advancing faster than our institutions can adapt. The decisions we make today will shape how effectively and safely we harness this technology to improve health outcomes for years to come.

The rapid advancement of AI creates an important challenge for Wisconsin. How do we ensure that our health care providers, businesses, policymakers, and citizens have the knowledge and resources to make informed decisions about this technology?

The challenge is not simply access to AI. It is understanding which applications are effective, where they can be trusted, what risks they introduce, and how those risks can be managed. This is especially important for smaller health care organizations that may lack the technical expertise and resources to evaluate AI systems independently.

Meeting this challenge requires access to trusted information and technical expertise. Organizations need reliable guidance on emerging technologies, opportunities to learn from the experiences of others, and connections to experts who can help them evaluate AI applications. A statewide resource that brings together knowledge, education, and practical experience could make a significant difference in Wisconsin's ability to adopt AI responsibly.

This is an area where UW–Madison can make an important contribution. Our university has deep expertise in artificial intelligence, medicine, public health, and related fields. Our new College of Computing & Artificial Intelligence brings together computer science, statistics, and information science, creating a foundation for interdisciplinary research, education, and engagement. Working with colleagues across the university and partners throughout Wisconsin, we can help translate rapidly evolving research into practical knowledge that serves the state.

This work reflects the Wisconsin Idea: the principle that the knowledge and discoveries of the university should benefit people throughout Wisconsin. By connecting our expertise with the needs of health care providers, policymakers, businesses, and communities, UW–Madison can help the state navigate this technological transition.

The proposed Wisconsin Office of AI Policy represents an important opportunity to address these challenges. UW–Madison has the expertise across campus to help inform and support this effort, and I would offer several considerations as the committee develops the proposal.

First, the office's name, scope, and authority should be clearly aligned. The current name suggests a broad responsibility for AI policy, while the proposed activities focus substantially on health care. The committee might consider either a more specific name, such as the Wisconsin Office of AI Healthcare Policy, or a broader mission consistent with its name. I would also encourage an advisory, educational, and informational role rather than giving the office direct regulatory or rulemaking authority. Its greatest value may be in helping Wisconsin organizations understand and navigate AI rather than serving as another regulator.

Second, UW–Madison and the college of Computing and Artificial Intelligence is well positioned to contribute to this effort, whether by helping lead the office or supporting another state agency. The expertise needed spans computing, medicine, public health, policy, and other disciplines. If the university has a formal role, the legislation should provide flexibility to determine how best to organize that contribution, rather than assigning responsibility to a particular college or unit.

Third, the legislation should allow for flexibility in implementation. AI is evolving rapidly, and the needs of the office will change as technologies and policies mature. Establishing broad responsibilities in statute while addressing operational details through interagency agreements or memoranda of understanding could provide the adaptability needed without requiring repeated legislative changes.

Finally, the proposed regulatory sandbox offers an opportunity to learn through carefully managed experimentation. Such a program could evaluate promising AI technologies in real-world settings, with appropriate safeguards, clear measures of success, and mechanisms for sharing what is learned. Importantly, oversight should be proportionate to risk. Systems supporting administrative tasks require different safeguards from those influencing diagnosis or treatment. The goal should be to encourage innovation while protecting patients and improving health outcomes.

Wisconsin has an opportunity to become a leader in responsible AI adoption by building the knowledge, partnerships, and practical experience needed to use these technologies effectively. UW–Madison stands ready to contribute its expertise to that effort.

Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions.