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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Hagedorn Visits United Hospital District** *Rural healthcare challenges discussed after facility tour*

**Blue Earth, MN – February 21, 2020** – United States Representative Jim Hagedorn (MN-01) visited United Hospital District (UHD) earlier this week in his hometown of Blue Earth. The congressman enjoyed a tour of UHD’s newly renovated Emergency Department and Blue Earth Clinic, then hosted a roundtable discussion regarding rural healthcare issues in Minnesota.

Mr. Hagedorn, who was born at UHD, was among the first to see UHD’s new Emergency Department. Renovation improvements include additional and larger exam rooms, new space for specialized services, more privacy and security for patients and staff alike, and numerous IT upgrades. UHD senior administrators leading the tour included Chief Executive Officer Rick Ash, Chief Financial Officer Patrick Justin, Chief Nursing Officer Melissa Storbeck, RN, Chief of Medical Staff Aaron Johnson, MD and Clinic Manager Sue Hassing, RN.

“With the inevitable need to stay current in a rapidly changing healthcare environment, we find ourselves growing out of our current spaces.” Richard Ash, CEO, said. “Our enhanced emergency room, which is the front door to the hospital for many of our patients, will enable us to provide a higher level of care within a safer and more secure environment. It improves our care team’s ability to treat life-threatening medical emergencies and provide more prompt and efficient care to expedite the treatment of minor medical emergencies.”

A conversation about rural healthcare followed the tour, with Mr. Hagedorn agreeing to the importance of keeping local healthcare in rural communities. Several obstacles were identified and discussed, including hospital reimbursements, difficulties with physician recruitment and prior authorization regulations. Mr. Hagedorn identified two current bills that address some needs but recognized the need for more legislation specific to rural communities.

Of the discussion, UHD's Dr. Johnson remarked, "If we do not make rural healthcare a priority, not only will our physical health be at jeopardy, but the health of our communities will be affected. The importance of this cannot be overstated. Rural communities are what built our great state; we need to make sure they are not forgotten."

Representative Hagedorn's visit took place in advance of UHD's official celebration of the project's completion. A public Open House event will take place on Saturday, February 29 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

UHD, located in Blue Earth, MN, is a system of care comprised of a 25-bed acute care hospital, comprehensive outpatient services, adolescent treatment center, ambulance service and home health/hospice care all supported by a 20-plus multi-specialty provider group with four clinic locations across two counties.



*UHD senior administrators met with U.S. Rep. Jim Hagedorn to discuss UHD's Renovation Project enhancements and discuss challenges in rural healthcare. Front row, left to right: UHD Clinic Manager Sue Hassing, RN and Chief Nursing Officer Melissa Storbeck, RN. Back row, left to right: UHD CFO Patrick Justin, Congressman Hagedorn, UHD Chief of Medical Staff Dr. Aaron Johnson and CEO Rick Ash.*