



Tony Evers

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

March 29, 2024

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE:

I am vetoing Senate Bill 158 in its entirety.

This bill would allow an individual without a permanent or training credential to apply for and receive from the Department of Safety and Professional Services a preliminary credential that permits the person to provide healthcare services through a healthcare employer. The preliminary credential may be granted to individuals who attest that they: (a) have not held a license, certificate, permit, or authorization to perform the services in Wisconsin or another jurisdiction; (b) have completed all required education, training, supervised experience, and other requirements for the permanent or training credential within the two-year period prior to applying for a preliminary credential; (c) have passed all examinations required to obtain a permanent or training healthcare credential from the department (other than interviews or oral examinations); (d) have submitted an application for the related permanent or training healthcare credential to the department; (e) have not had a disqualifying arrest or conviction, including an attestation that they have not been convicted of any felony or of a misdemeanor involving bodily harm to, or sexual contact with, another individual; and (f) to the best of their knowledge, they have not had an arrest or conviction that would cause the department or credentialing board to deny their application.

The bill further requires applicants for preliminary credentials to be employed to provide services within the scope of the credential by a healthcare employer. An applicant's healthcare employer must provide the department with its national provider identifier and must attest that: (a) it has engaged the individual to provide services related to the credential for which the individual has applied; (b) the individual has, to the best of the employer's knowledge and with a reasonable degree of certainty, completed the education, training, experience, and examination requirements noted above; and (c) the individual has passed a background check performed by the healthcare employer that did not reveal any disqualifying convictions.

I am vetoing this bill because I object to potentially reducing patient protections from individuals who have a disqualifying criminal background by allowing unlicensed individuals to receive preliminary healthcare credentials based solely upon their own attestations and employer-conducted background checks. The department would have no way to discern the veracity of an employer-conducted background check and no ability to hold employers accountable for false or neglectful attestations. Under the bill, a preliminary credential must be granted prior to a thorough review of a credential applicant's background (and any attendant legal issues) by the department. I appreciate the need for Wisconsin to retain, train, and recruit more qualified healthcare workers across our state; however, I cannot support legislation that seeks to achieve



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this goal by reducing healthcare patient protections and putting Wisconsinites at serious risk across our state.

The bill, as amended by Assembly Amendment 1, also would ratify and enter Wisconsin into the multistate Social Work Licensure Compact, allowing social workers from compact member states to practice in other member states. It is unfortunate that the Wisconsin State Legislature chose to include in this bill, at a very late date and with no obvious substantive connection to the bill as introduced, an actual worthy proposal to enter the state into the Social Work Licensure Compact. That proposal, originally introduced as a stand-alone bill, would have responsibly eliminated barriers preventing social workers from practicing in compact states, in an effort to increase the number of social work service providers in Wisconsin. However, the potential harm to the state's residents from the preliminary credential proposal is too great. I therefore must veto this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony Evers".

Tony Evers
Governor