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TO: Senate Committee on Licensing, Constitution and Federalism
FROM: Senator Rob Stafsholt
DATE: May 25, 2023
SUBJECT: Testimony in Favor of Senate Bills 189, 190, 192, 193 & 194

Thank you, Chairman Jacque and members of the Senate Committee on Licensing, Constitution and Federalism, for allowing me to testify in favor of Senate Bills 189, 190, 192, 193 and 194.

Over the last couple of years, I have heard from many frustrated constituents that are dealing with unnecessary delays, confusion and lack of communication while attempting to get an occupational license from the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS). These unnecessary delays cause individuals to have to postpone starting their careers or stops them from entering the workforce. Wisconsin businesses are struggling to find qualified workers so we need to ensure our licensure process is streamlined and functions efficiently. We cannot afford to fall behind other states in attracting skilled individuals to live and work in our state.

In response, leadership created the Legislative Council Study Committee on Occupational Licenses, and I was honored to be appointed as Chair. The study committee was created with the goal of finding solutions so current and future license holders can be licensed in a timely manner. In other words, we were tasked with finding long-term solutions that will fix the problems plaguing DSPS. The committee was made up of two Republican and two Democratic legislators as well as five members of the public.

Through our conversations with licensed professionals, research and policy groups, and the Department of Safety and Professional Services, our study committee focused our bill recommendations on three primary issue areas: data tracking, workload simplification, and reciprocal credentialing.

Senate Bill 189 and 190 fall under the area of data tracking. The committee felt it was important to have a better handle on the numbers. The committee recommended both bills for introduction: Senate Bill 189, which requires DSPS to include credential processing data in the report it submits to the Legislature every two years; and Senate Bill 190, which requires DSPS to update processing time information on its website every month, so that a person submitting a credential application can anticipate the time for processing. These both require some basic information, such as the number of applications submitted and the median amount of time it's taking to process the applications.

For the second issue, the study committee looked at ways it could help DSPS and applicants have a simpler process, while maintaining integrity in the review of applications. Bills that fall in this issue area include:

- Senate Bill 192, which clarifies that it is the applicant's responsibility to submit all renewal materials before the renewal date and also clarifies that if a complete renewal application is submitted by that date a person's license remains active and in effect.
- Senate Bill 193, which changes the renewal periods from two years to four years.

For the third issue area of reciprocal credentialing, the study committee recommend Senate Bill 194, which expands 2021 Wisconsin Act 10 to allow people in all business and health professions who are licensed in good standing in another state to work in Wisconsin under a preliminary credential while approval of the permanent credential is pending.

Study committee members broadly supported all of these bills and recommended them for introduction. We felt like these bills would improve processes and oversight. Thank you for your support of these bills and feel free to reach out with any questions.



SHAE SORTWELL

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 2nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Hearing Testimony
Senate Committee on Licensing, Constitution, and Federalism
May 25, 2023
Senate Bills 189, 190, 192, 193, and 194

Chairman Jacque and members of the Senate Committee on Licensing, Constitution, and Federalism – Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on five bills that stemmed from the Study Committee on Occupational Licenses.

The study committee focused its bill recommendations on three issue areas to address the professional licensure backlog at the Department of Safety and Professional Services: data tracking, workload simplification, and reciprocal credentialing.

Senate Bills 189 and 190 fall under the category of data tracking. SB 189 would require DSPS to supply licensing data in a biennial report that my office has been requesting and still has not received for more than two years. Transparency on processing times is integral to solving any issues that are plaguing the department. SB 190 would require the department to publish the same data on their website, which would be helpful for the public, notably prospective licensees.

Senate Bills 192 and 193 fall under the category of workload simplification. SB 192 would allow licensed professionals to continue working within the scope of their license once they submit their renewal application rather than wait for the department to approve it. This will create less need and urgency to process these applications in order to focus time on other areas. SB 193 would extend renewal times from two to four years instead, which would decrease the workload of the department every year.

Senate Bill 194 applies to reciprocal credentialing. This legislation would expand 2021 Wisconsin Act 10 from most healthcare providers to also include business professions and other healthcare professionals, meaning the department would be required to grant a preliminary credential to these licensed professionals in another state that applied for a permanent credential in Wisconsin.

All of these bills received bipartisan support in the study committee and Joint Legislative Council. It is my hope that they receive the same treatment in this committee and in the full Senate.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on this legislation and would gladly answer any questions the committee may have.



May 25, 2023

TO: Senate Committee on Licensing, Constitution and Federalism
FROM: Mike Tierney, Legislative Liaison, Department of Safety and Professional Services
RE: Senate Bill 190 - Publication of credential metrics.

Good afternoon,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on Senate Bill 190.

The department has made strides in licensure and has a great story to share through the provision of meaningful and relevant data.

LicensE places applicants in the driving seat of their applications. The launch of that system in May of 2022 has been extremely successful and, as of two days ago, applicants who seek a business credential are now able to share in that success.

This bill, as introduced, contains no funding for software modifications that will need to be made to produce the data necessary to produce the report. Nor does the bill contain a delayed effective date to ensure the software is in place. The bill is also silent on the staffing needed to gather the data necessary to track and produce the data necessary for the report.

While there are the same concerns with arbitrary metrics found in this bill as in Assembly Bill 200, this bill also requires the reporting of applications submitted and in process after 45 days have elapsed.

Presently, if an application is submitted, is clean, and the applicant is engaged and legally eligible – licensing timelines across all occupations in LicensE are under 45 days.

If an application is initiated and takes more than 45 days to complete, that is likely to be due to circumstances beyond the Department's control. Some individuals apply for licenses long before they are eligible. We see applications come in months before someone is due to graduate or sit for an exam. In other instances, individuals who reported previous convictions or other legal violations must also go through the legal review process. Some applications are simply abandoned and never withdrawn. Other times an applicant has unusual circumstances or complexity to their application, and these circumstances require more communication back and forth with our staff.

The question applicants will naturally ask if this bill were to become law is this: why are credentialing staff being pulled away from processing the applications of people who are active and engaged and ready to be licensed, to produce a regular report on the number of incomplete applications that are more than 45 days old?

Under the old system, there is no doubt that timelines were at times onerous. Timelines went up every year under the Walker Administration under that system and it was a trend that continued until the implementation of LicensE. To the extent that metrics ought to be reported, those metrics ought to report information that is relevant to and driven by the current systems in place.