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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 192 – Renewal of certain credentials

Good afternoon,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on Senate Bill 192.

In each of the past two legislative sessions, the department has pursued this issue in the Law Revision Committee. The intent was to clarify, for credential holders, that renewal submission is complete when they submit necessary forms and pay the fee for renewal. As such, the department supports Senate Bill 192 as introduced.

The provision in Chapter 227 allowing the department to keep a credential active when the credential holder has completed steps to renew is intended to protect the livelihood of the credential holder.

For example, while an RN can file for timely renewal until midnight on the last day of February of an even numbered year under current law, the processing of that renewal is not immediate. On March 1, the public look-up will reflect the credential is active, but the new expiration date two years in the future will not yet appear.

Most often, a person who completes the renewal but does not have their renewed credential within one or two days will have an issue that legally prevents an immediate, full renewal of the credential. Although statutes require the reporting of a conviction within 48 hours, many people do not report a conviction as required by law. When they renew and complete the attestation and report a conviction for the first time, the department is legally obligated to complete a review of the conviction prior to issuing a full renewal. Another issue that can prevent full renewal is a Department of Revenue hold which is in place due to a tax debt. Under statute, we are prohibited from fully renewing or issuing a new credential to a person who has a DOR hold.

Chapter 227 also protects the credential holder in the event there are any issues such that would prevent department staff from completing their work on a renewal.