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To: Senate Committee on Health

FROM: Senator Rob Stafsholt

DATE: September 27, 2023

SUBJECT: Testimony in Favor of Senate Bills 196, 197, 391 & 400

Thank you, Chairwoman Cabral-Guevara and members of the Senate Committee on Health, for allowing me to testify in favor of Senate Bills 196, 197, 391 and 400.

Over the last few 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's healthcare and business sectors 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. 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 DSPS, our study committee focused our bill recommendations on three primary issue areas: data tracking, workload simplification, and reciprocal credentialing. The following bills being heard today fall under the third issue area of reciprocal credentialing:

- Senate Bill 196 relating to ratification of the Counseling Compact.
- Senate Bill 197 relating to ratification of the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact.
- Senate Bill 391 relating to ratification of the Social Work Licensure Compact.
- Senate Bill 400 relating to ratification of the PA Licensure Compact

Senate Bill 196 and 197 are both interstate compacts that the study committee members broadly supported and recommended them for introduction. Senate Bills 391 and 400 are also interstate compacts that we didn't have enough time to discuss before our final hearing.

Interstate compacts allow states to create an agreement and implement standards for occupational licensing of specific professions. These compacts would allow professional, licensed individuals residing in a compact member state to practice in other member states without the need for multiple licenses. Compacts provide a clear pathway for professionals to move seamlessly from one state to another through an agreement among states to recognize another state's occupational license.

Wisconsin has recently enacted legislation allowing our state to participate in a number of interstate compacts including the Physical Therapy Compact, the Occupational Therapy Compact, the Enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact (eNLC), and others.

Thank you, members. I ask for your support and would be happy to answer any questions.



NANCY VANDERMEER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 70TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Health

FROM: State Representative Nancy VanderMeer

DATE: September 27, 2023

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 400

Thank you Chairperson Cabral-Guevera for holding a hearing on SB 400 today and thank you to members of the Senate Committee on Health for being here. As I would suspect that many of you are aware, Physician Assistants (PAs) are critically important healthcare professionals. Over 4,600 PAs practice in Wisconsin, working with physicians to provide quality, cost-effective team-based care to patients across the state. PAs practice in every area of medicine performing activities such as physical exams, diagnosing and treating illnesses, assisting in surgery, and prescribing medication. They are extremely important to maintaining and increasing access to primary care, especially in underserved/rural parts of the state.

We're here today to discuss ratification of a PA Compact here in Wisconsin. Last November, the American Academy of Physician Associates, the Council of State Governments, the Federation of State Medical Boards, and the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants released a model PA Licensure Compact bill to ease license portability and decrease the administrative burden of a PA having to secure a license in multiple states. For this licensure compact to take effect, seven states need to adopt the compact language through legislation. Recently, Utah and Delaware became the first two states to adopt the PA Compact and it is under consideration in several other states. Passage of this legislation would allow Physician Assistants in Wisconsin to help steer the initial creation and oversight of the compact commission, which can be beneficial to our state's professionals/associations, as we've learned with other professional compacts that many of us have worked on and this body has worked on together.

This particular compact is not notably different from a number of compacts that this body has worked with, passed, and enacted in the past few years. In this PA Compact, a professional in Wisconsin wishing to obtain an **optional** compact license would apply to receive the license and then, if issued, be able to receive a privilege to practice in other compact states. The inverse would be true for compact licensees from other states wishing to practice in our state.

I think that one of the best things we can do as a legislative body is to remove barriers to care by allowing and encouraging healthcare professionals to provide care where it's needed. This compact, and others like it, remove barriers to care by allowing and encouraging health care professionals to provide care where it's needed while at the same time preserving our state's high standards pertaining to licensing, regulation, professionalism, and quality of care. Again, thank you for the opportunity to be here today, the opportunity for a public hearing on this legislation, and the chance to move this bill forward in the process.



**SB 400 Legislative Testimony (Interested Party)
Wisconsin Senate Health Committee**

September 27, 2023

Chair Cabral-Guevara and Senate Health Committee Members:

The Council of State Governments (CSG) is a nonpartisan membership organization that serves the three branches of state governments. The CSG National Center for Interstate Compacts is a technical assistance provider for states on interstate compacts. CSG has provided technical assistance to states during the development of the PA Licensure Compact (PA Compact).

The PA Compact is an interstate compact, or a contract among states, allowing physician assistants (PAs) licensed in a compact member state to practice in other compact member states without the need for multiple licenses. Like other interstate licensure compacts, the PA Compact is designed to improve access to services, enhance mobility for practitioners, support relocating military spouses, improve continuity of care, and ensure cooperation among compact member states.

The PA Compact reflects how states currently license PAs. For example, to participate in the compact, PAs must hold an unrestricted license, have no felony or misdemeanor convictions, have graduated from an accredited PA program, and hold current National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants certification. PAs who meet the uniform requirements are permitted to obtain a privilege to practice, which is equivalent to a PA license in another state.

Compact member states retain control over scope and licensure requirements. For example, any collaboration, supervision or controlled substance prescription authority requirements Wisconsin necessitates for practice would have to be met by a PA before they are able to exercise a privilege to practice.

The compact creates a shared interstate licensure data system which facilitates the application and granting of a privilege to practice. The data system also enhances public protection by ensuring that member states share investigative and disciplinary information with one another.

The PA Compact is newly available for states in 2023 and is one of the 15 interstate licensure compacts currently in existence. Wisconsin is currently a member of five licensure compacts, including the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact, Nurse



Licensure Compact, Occupational Therapy Compact, Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact and Physical Therapy Compact.

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver informational testimony for the committee. CSG is available to assist with any questions regarding the PA Compact or interstate compact law.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Sims', is positioned below the word 'Respectfully,'.

Carl Sims
Deputy Program Director
National Center for Interstate Compacts
The Council of State Governments

To: Chairperson Cabral-Guevara
Members, Senate Committee on Health

From: Michelle M. Lipke MPAS, PA-C
WAPA Legislative & Governmental Affairs Committee
PAs in Virtual Medicine & Telemedicine Legislative Committee

Date: September 27, 2023

Re: SB 400, ratification of the Physician Assistant Licensure Compact

I am writing to request your support for Senate Bill 400, legislation introduced by Sen. Stafsholt and Rep. VanderMeer, which proposes that Wisconsin join a multistate PA Licensure Compact for physician assistants (PAs).

With more than 4,604 PAs licensed to practice in Wisconsin, they are diligently delivering high-quality, cost-effective, and collaborative healthcare to patients across the state. PAs are versatile healthcare professionals who span various medical fields, conducting physical and mental health assessments, diagnosing and treating illnesses, assisting in surgeries and prescribing medications.

The PA Licensure Compact stands as an interstate licensure compact for PAs, backed by constitutional authorization, legal enforceability and legislative endorsement from participating states. If enacted, it will simplify the process for PAs to apply for privileges in any Compact state, offering a streamlined pathway.

In my 30 years as a PA, I have held a Wisconsin PA license. Over the past two years, I acquired PA licenses in Illinois, Michigan, New York, and California for telehealth practice. The cumbersome process of obtaining these additional licenses took four months for them to be processed and many states take an even longer time. Telehealth organizations mandate applicants to possess these licenses before considering them for positions. Senate Bill 400 not only expedites the credentialing process for PAs within state healthcare facilities but also ensures timely patient care for individuals traversing clinic and hospital borders across neighboring states.

Senate Bill 400 will bolster the portability of PA Licensure, curbing health care delays, enhancing patient access, and relieving administrative burden on the state. Importantly, it is essential to underscore that the compact will not alter Wisconsin's existing laws and regulation governing PA practice. Instead, any PA utilizing compact privileges in Wisconsin will be required to adhere to all state regulations.

The benefits of the Compact are diverse and extend to various stakeholders. For practitioners and patients, it simplifies multistate practice, reducing the complexity of maintaining multiple licenses and opening the doors to new employment opportunities in different markets. Importantly, it will ensure uninterrupted care during patient or provider relocations and provides invaluable support to relocating military spouses. For regulators, it streamlines application processing, offers access to investigative and disciplinary data through an interstate data system, and enhances cooperation among state licensure boards; all while preserving existing state laws and regulations for patient protection. Additionally, it permits states to charge compact privilege fees and maintains the integrity of the state-based licensure system. Furthermore, for states the Compact promotes workforce development, strengthens labor markets, expands patient access to highly qualified practitioners, preserves state sovereignty, fosters collaboration among states, and facilitates practitioner mobility during public health emergencies. These multifaceted benefits collectively drive progress in healthcare access and mobility while safeguarding patient safety and state authority.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 400, as it has the potential to revolutionize healthcare access and mobility in Wisconsin which will benefit patients, healthcare providers, and healthcare in Wisconsin.



WISCONSIN ACADEMY
of
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

To: Chairperson Cabral-Guevara
Members, Senate Committee on Health

From: Paula Cynkar, PA-C

Date: September 27, 2023

Re: SB 400, ratification of the Physician Assistant Licensure Compact

Thank you for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 400, legislation which would ratify Wisconsin's participation in a multistate physician assistant licensure compact. On behalf of the more than 4,604 PAs licensed to practice in Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Academy of Physician Assistants urges you to support SB 400.

For nearly fifty years, WAPA has represented the interests of PAs practicing in Wisconsin, including advocating for quality, cost-effective and accessible health care for Wisconsinites throughout the state. Ratification of the PA licensure compact will benefit PAs seeking to practice in Wisconsin and other states, our patients, and state licensing administrators.

Recruiting & Retaining Providers

Like many states, Wisconsin is competing to recruit and retain qualified health care providers to meet the needs of patients. The role that PAs play in meeting these health care needs in Wisconsin and across the country is critically important.

Today, hundreds of PAs in Wisconsin are working in primary care settings, including in our rural and medically-underserved communities. Our five PA programs in Wisconsin graduate dozens of new PA graduates each year who are ready to get to work serving patients.

So, it is important that Wisconsin look for ways to recruit, retain and fully leverage the PA workforce to meet the needs of Wisconsinites. The PA Compact can be a useful tool in this effort.

If enacted, the compact will strengthen access to medical services provided by PAs via the mutual recognition of a PA's qualifying license by other compact participating states, streamlining the licensing process.

Overview of the PA Compact

Wisconsin is no stranger to interstate licensure compacts, having already enacted five compacts for other health care providers, such as for physicians and nurses. Like the compacts that the state already participates in, the PA Compact is a constitutionally authorized, legally binding, and legislatively enacted contract among participating states. While WAPA is pleased to offer our insights into the benefits of the PA Compact, we also recognize this is a nationwide effort. This year, seven states filed legislation to enter the PA Compact and the Compact is receiving support, expertise, and counsel from respected organizations such as the Federation of State Medical Boards, the National Commission on the

Certification of Physician Assistants, the Council of State Governments, and the American Academy of PAs. WAPA is pleased to see this effort gain momentum and support.

Implementation of the Compact

Should Senate Bill 400 become law and Wisconsin join the PA Compact, the Compact would be administered by a compact commission, an interstate government agency comprised of delegates from compact member states. This would also allow for the creation of a licensure data system to improve information sharing between compact member states, including disciplinary information.

States joining the compact would agree to recognize a valid, unencumbered license issued by another compact member state via a compact privilege. Licensed PAs utilizing the compact can obtain a privilege in each compact member state where they want to practice.

Importantly, PAs using a compact privilege to practice in another state must adhere to the laws and regulations of that state and are under the jurisdiction of the state's regulatory board in which they are practicing. In short, PAs practicing in Wisconsin thanks to a compact privilege must follow Wisconsin laws and Wisconsin rules and would be under the jurisdiction of our Physician Assistant Affiliated Credentialing Board.

The PA Compact also affirms that the practice and delivery of medical services by the PA occurs where the patient is located at the time of the patient encounter. As such, the compact requires the PA to be under the jurisdiction of the state licensing board where the patient is located, preserving the sovereignty of Wisconsin's rules and regulations and safeguards Wisconsin's ability to regulate PAs, charge licensing fees, and preserve the structure of the state-based licensing system.

Benefits of the Compact

If enacted, the Compact will provide several benefits to PAs, patients, and state regulators.

First, the Compact will facilitate license portability, making it easier for PAs to practice without lengthy licensing delays or administrative burdens. Rather than obtaining an individual license in each state where they want to practice, a PA can utilize the PA compact to apply for compact privileges through a streamlined process. This can make Wisconsin more competitive in attracting high-quality practitioners.

For patients, we anticipate this will mean expanded access to highly qualified practitioners and making it easier to mobilize practitioners during public health emergencies. But, beyond the benefits to patients, the state could benefit from improved cross-state collaboration, enhanced public safety through data sharing and a strengthened health care labor market.

Wisconsin's PAs stand ready to be a resource to the committee and we ask for your favorable consideration of SB 400.

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

If you have any questions after today's hearing, please contact R.J. Pirlot of the Hamilton Consulting Group at 608-258-9506.