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TO: Members of the Legislative Council Study Committee on Occupational Licenses

FROM: Ann Zenk, RN BSN MHA, Vice President Workforce and Clinical Practice

DATE: July 29, 2022

RE: Impact of Licensure Processes on Wisconsin's Health Care Workforce

The Wisconsin hospital and health system workforce is more than 110,000-strong. In 2022 more than 70% of those employees are dependent on state licensure for their employment and to provide health care services to the Wisconsin communities they serve. As [WHA's 2022 Wisconsin Health Care Workforce Report](#) shows, the Silver Tsunami, as the aging of the very large baby boom generation has been called, has a double impact on health care. Like every other industry, the health care work force is shrinking as baby boomers reach retirement age. Health care faces an additional challenge, as aging creates increased health care demand. Health care employers are facing double-digit and rising vacancy rates in licensed occupations like nursing and respiratory therapy. When delays in licensure occur, they are acutely felt by applicants waiting for employment and by employers working to maintain and grow health care access to meet rising demand.

WHA has been a lead advocate with Wisconsin lawmakers to enact public policy such as 2021 Wisconsin Act 10, the Enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact and the Medical Licensure Compact to minimize or eliminate licensure barriers for health care providers to begin practicing more quickly in Wisconsin. We've appreciated the opportunity to work with the Wisconsin state legislature, Governor's past and present and the Department of Safety and Professional Services to create and implement these changes. We appreciate the ability to further this bipartisan work through the Legislative Council Study Committee on Occupational Licenses.

We know there is more work to be done to ensure that Wisconsin's licensure processes support the health care workforce necessary to sustain quality and access. We want to take this opportunity to share additional potential solutions to assist in the review and improvement of occupational licensure in Wisconsin:

- 2021 Act 10 has been a great success for health care occupational licensure reform, by allowing us to utilize trained health care providers in good standing from another state. Act 10 has also made Wisconsin more competitive in recruiting these providers. The committee may consider extending this expedited process to other license types, or to new graduates, further leveraging a process that has proven to work well.
- Consider options to reduce unnecessary delays from the current very lengthy legal review process.
- Contemplate streamlining third-party verifications by utilizing national databases for transcript, graduation or licensure data, or consider obtaining more information directly from the applicant.
- Since most licenses are currently on a 2-year renewal period, the study committee could consider extending the renewal period to reduce unnecessary paperwork.
- Explore adding accountability or reporting metrics, especially as DSPS has transitioned to a new electronic licensure process, to better keep track of how efficiently licenses are being processed and which steps may be causing unnecessary delays.

Wisconsin's high quality health care system is reliant on our highly-skilled and exceptional health care workforce. We look forward to working with the study committee to ensure licensure performs its intended function of ensuring patient and consumer safety without creating barriers to care for patients and hurdles to health care careers.