



September 23, 2022

Dear Senator Stafsholt, Representative Sortwell, Margit Kelley, Patrick Ward and Kelly Mautz:

The La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium (LMHSC) Board of Directors is sending this collaborative letter regarding the continued delays for Wisconsin health professional licensure. Several of us have contacted the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DPS) on behalf of our individual organizations. We have been asked to be patient as the concerns with staffing and upgraded software implementation are being addressed through the Legislative Council Study Committee on Occupational Licenses.

On a daily basis, several of the LMHSC partners are affected by these licensure delays. Some regional concerns are listed below:

- We are spending public tax dollars on educating health profession students at the University of Wisconsin- La Crosse and Western Technical College. In addition, Viterbo University graduates well over a hundred nursing students annually. With the proximity of La Crosse to the border of Minnesota, healthcare staff have a choice of working in either state. Unfortunately, we are unable to track how many healthcare professionals may have “crossed the border” due to licensure delays.
- Western Technical College offers various allied health profession programs. These graduates are also experiencing barriers to obtaining licensure, which delays their entry into the healthcare workforce. There is significant inconsistency, with some graduates reporting receipt of testing authorization in less than 10 days whereas others report a delay of three weeks or more.
- There are verifiable long delays in receiving RN licensure after passing the NCLEX, which impedes the hiring of healthcare workers at our local healthcare institutions, nursing homes, etc. Both regional healthcare systems (Gundersen Health System and Mayo Clinic Health System – Franciscan Healthcare) report that many patients are ready for hospital discharge. However, due to healthcare workforce shortages the nursing homes in turn are unable to accept placements. Consequently, the hospitals have fewer available beds to admit acute care patients.
- Viterbo University is a Wisconsin-based School of Nursing. Minnesota nurses teaching at Minnesota sites for Viterbo must be licensed in both states since Minnesota is not a Compact state. Therefore, Viterbo needs to have dual licensed nursing faculty on site in Minnesota to provide legal oversight for those MN-licensed nurses awaiting licensure or permit status in Wisconsin. This has created an additional faculty hardship for Viterbo.

We encourage the Legislative Council Study Committee on Occupational Licenses to collaborate with DSPS to develop and implement an action plan to address the licensure barriers. Our colleges are preparing the healthcare workforce, the graduates are ready for entry into practice, and healthcare institutions need their expertise. The DSPS backlog affects the wellbeing of many, including those awaiting professional licensure, those awaiting hospital discharge, and those working long hours to alleviate the healthcare professional shortage. Delayed access to healthcare has repercussions for the wellbeing of all we serve.

Sincerely,

LMHSC Board of Directors

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