

2022 Legislative Council Study Committee on Occupational Licenses

Committee Bill Package from Legislative Council Memo No. 4

December 13, 2022

Chair Stafsholt, Vice-Chair Sortwell, and members of the 2022 Legislative Council Study Committee on Occupational Licenses, SSM Health would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the preliminary package of bills listed in the [November 8, 2022 memo](#) to the study committee from the Wisconsin Legislative Council. We appreciate the committee's members and the staff at Legislative Council for compiling this list of proposals and for all the work you have done on this important topic.

SSM Health is a Catholic, not-for-profit health system serving the comprehensive health needs of communities across the Midwest through a robust and fully integrated health care delivery system. The organization's more than 40,000 employees and physicians – including approximately 14,500 in Wisconsin – are committed to providing exceptional health care services and revealing God's healing presence to everyone they serve. Our system has seven hospitals in Wisconsin including SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital – Janesville, which serves a portion of Senator Ringhand's district.

As an employer of credentialed healthcare providers in the state, we engage in the professional licensing process often and have appreciated the work and communication from the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) in this space. While the Department's effort is recognized, we also believe that some of the licensing reforms included in the study committee's original package would benefit the applicants, employers, and industries impacted by delays our organization has encountered in this process.

Specifically, we would like to offer our support for the general concepts put forth in a few of the initial bill drafts that were in front of the committee in November:

- **LRB-0363/P3** – In our experience the legal review – while certainly necessary – does add, sometimes significant, time to the application process, so creating limited exemptions for specific “older,” “minor,” and nonviolent offenses would be beneficial and is a prudent reform.
- **LRB-0367/P3** – Creating a preliminary credential for new graduates would help get new employees who have not held a credential before to a point where they can start working in their role more efficiently.
- **LRB-0401/P2** – While we do not want to provide comment on the idea of expanding 2021 WI Act 10 outside of the healthcare industry, this proposal also includes some health-related professions that were inadvertently not included in that original bill. We are supportive of adding those occupations.
- **LRB-0450/P2** – This proposal would extend 2-year licenses to 4-years which would allow for greater time between renewals. This is a sensible reform that would be helpful.

We appreciate the work this committee and DSPS have done in researching and examining these topics. We urge the committee and DSPS to work together on understanding and coming to an agreement on any potential changes in processes, department flexibilities, or resources that may be needed to ensure the reforms laid out in these legislative proposals can be accomplished in an expeditious and sustainable manner.

As you consider final recommendations please know that SSM Health believes the ideas from your original package outlined above would all make practical changes to the licensing process and improve the timelines with which applicants are granted their credentials.

In a time where there are workforce shortages, especially in rural areas of Wisconsin, we want to make it easier for high quality skilled workers to provide essential frontline care for the communities we serve. We look forward to working with you and members of the legislature to make Wisconsin a best-in-class state for licensing.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments supporting certain ideas contained in a few of the proposals in the package of bills in your study committee. Again, please note that these comments are specific to the November 8, 2022 bills that were outlined in Wisconsin Legislative Council Memo No. 4. Our organization is still reviewing the latest changes and additions to this package. If you have any questions please feel free to reach out to SSM Health's Director of Government Affairs, Ben Van Pelt, at benjamin.vanpelt@ssmhealth.com.