



RACHAEL A. CABRAL-GUEVARA

STATE SENATOR • 19TH SENATE DISTRICT

Testimony before the Senate Committee on Licensing, Constitution, and Federalism

Senator Rachael Cabral-Guevara

May 25, 2023

Hello, Chairman Jacque and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 158, an important piece of legislation that will help streamline the credentialing process and allow more trained professionals to efficiently enter the workforce.

Over the last decade, Wisconsin has been dealing with the looming threat of a workforce crisis. This acutely impacts professions that require extensive years of education and training, especially in healthcare. With a lack of trained professionals in key industries and demand growing, there needs to be a more efficient on-ramp to keep them in Wisconsin.

This issue was again highlighted by the inability for the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DPS) to approve credentials in a timely manner. Though the approval process has somewhat improved, thousands are still waiting for credentials and the backlog still persists. Doctors, nurses, therapists, chiropractors, and so many others are being prevented from working even though they have completed their required education and training. Wisconsin is now losing these professionals to other states because they cannot get their license approved.

This bill will help make the transition from education to the workforce as seamless as possible. Rather than waiting months for a license or credential, these professionals will be able to work once they submit their application for approval. This preliminary credential will still be under the supervision of the applicable governing board and be active unless DPS ultimately denies their application.

With how critical the need is for workers across the state, we need to make sure they do not look elsewhere simply because of bureaucratic inefficiency. This bill will allow DPS the time needed to process applications while keeping those professionals we desperately need in Wisconsin.

Thank you again for your time. I am hopeful you are able to support this piece of legislation which will help aid a much needed transition from school to work for those who have already completed necessary training for their profession.



JOY GOEBEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 5th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony before the Senate Committee on Licensing, Constitution and Federalism

Representative Joy Goeben

May 25, 2023

Hello, Chairman Jacque and fellow members of this committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 158. It is an important piece of legislation that will help streamline the process of credentialing and licensing of certain healthcare professionals, and allow trained professionals to efficiently enter the workforce sooner.

Wisconsin is dealing with a workforce crisis. It is a crisis that has been looming for decades, but is now upon us. This crisis impacts all professional licenses throughout Wisconsin, but is particularly problematic in our healthcare professions. These professions require extensive education and training, lasting years, and costing thousands of dollars. These professionals represent an important part of Wisconsin's economy, and with demand for these high-skilled jobs growing, there is a need to efficiently get these professionals working.

The issue is highlighted by the delays in approval of licenses as DSPS works through its process. Sometimes, highly qualified professionals wait for months to be approved. Though DSPS is improving, and these delays are shortened, it is not sufficient to meet the needs of employers and citizens in Wisconsin. An unacceptable number of doctors, nurses, therapists, chiropractors, and so many others are being prevented from working even though they have completed their required education and training. Because of the delays, Wisconsin is losing professionals trained here to other states. We cannot afford to let this go on any longer.

This legislation will streamline the transition from training and education to gainfully employed professional. Instead of waiting weeks and months for approval of a license, these highly trained professionals can begin working immediately upon completing their training and education, and after submitting the required application to DSPS.

This provisional licensee will, as is usual today, be under the supervision of the applicable governing board(s), and the employer, who has vetted and hired the professional. And the education and training has been passed by expert faculty at colleges and universities. Many times, too, there are licensing exams that need to be taken and passed. None of this will change. And of course, DSPS will have the final say, and will continue its role in ensuring that the applicant has all of the proper credentials.

This legislation is not meant to disparage the very important work that DSPS does to "dot all the Is and cross all the Ts." Rather, this legislation will allow highly educated and trained professionals, who will ultimately be granted their license, to get to work immediately. This legislation allows DSPS to take the time that it needs to process the applications of these professionals without interference.

I hope you support this legislation. It will help alleviate a crisis in Wisconsin's healthcare profession by letting highly qualified people get to work immediately. In turn, the entire state will benefit as these qualified and talented people stay in Wisconsin. Thank you for your time and consideration.



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 158 - Preliminary health care credentials granted to previously unlicensed individuals

Good afternoon,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony for informational purposes on Senate Bill 158

First, I should note that Wisconsin has turned a corner on licensure over the past year. The fact is that in 2021 we issued more credentials than had ever been issued before in the history of the department. In 2022, thanks to modernization, process and procedure changes, and the hard work of staff, we surpassed the 2021 total.

As of May of last year, licensure software was modernized for all professions impacted by this legislation. On May 1 of this year, we are adding other business and trades credentials to the modern licensure platform.

When I began at the department, many had been experiencing extended licensure timelines for several years. Those timelines went up year after year after year during the Walker Administration. And that trend continued through 2021 despite DPS issuing more credentials than ever before. These extended timelines were due to increases in application volume, stagnant staffing levels, and antiquated software. In 2022 - because the Governor authorized temporary positions with federal funds and our efforts to modernize IT infrastructure - we have not only stopped that trend but reversed it, cutting overall licensure timeframes.

Today, a person who receives the education and training necessary to enter a profession can go online, create an application for permanent licensure, submit it, and then upload documentation as necessary.

At this point, the receipt of the statute and rule exam results or national exam results are typically the last requirement to be met to issue a permanent credential. If an application does not require legal review or has been qualified via pre-determination, then we receive their statute and rule exam score and/or their national exam score and we issue the credential.

Under this bill, the two main criteria for issuing the preliminary health care credential are completion of education and training and the receipt of exam scores. Under current law, when a person has a clean application and has reached the point in the application process where these items have been met, we are issuing the permanent credential.

be completely sober at work if licensed. Under current law, persons with these issues are going to be denied or issued a credential that is extremely limited in nature with monitoring requirements in place.

Again, we are making progress and strides to make Wisconsin a leader in issuing credentials quickly, efficiently and appropriately without sacrificing public health or safety. The role of the department and boards as both licensure authorities and regulators are vital. While we strive to work with applicants, our priority is the public.

We have increased transparency in the process of licensure in LicenseE which enables individuals to see what they need to provide and when documentation was provided. We are working to provide applicants with a clear, concise, easily understood path to licensure in the profession of their choice. The reality is that if a person reviews the website for their occupation on LicenseE, completes forms correctly and has them ready to go, they are going to get their credential more quickly than ever before.

The department simply asks that you support the budget requests that are already before the Joint Committee on Finance.

Thank you.



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TO: Senate Committee on Licensing, Constitution and Federalism

**FROM: Ann Zenk, SVP Workforce & Clinical Practice
Jon Hoelter, VP Federal and State Relations**

DATE: May 25, 2023

RE: WHA Testimony in Support of SB 158, SB 193, and SB 194: Legislation to Improve Licensure Process for Health Care Professionals

Chair Jacque, and members of the Committee on Licensing, Constitution and Federalism, thank you for holding a hearing on SB 158, relating to: preliminary health care credentials granted to previously unlicensed individuals; SB 193, relating to: renewal dates and continuing education requirements for certain credentials issued by the Department of Safety and Professional Services and credentialing boards; and SB 194, relating to: practice of certain professions by credential holders from other states. The Wisconsin Hospital Association represents more than 135 hospitals and integrated health systems across the state, from small, rural, Critical Access Hospitals to large, urban academic medical centers, and everything in between.

While our members may differ greatly in the size of the community they serve, one consistent challenge they all face is how to meet the ever-increasing demand for health care services in an environment where every sector is experiencing a workforce shortage. As the baby boom generation ages, the number of available workers in Wisconsin and across the nation is shrinking for all industries, but for health care, an aging population also means an increase in health care demand.

While staffing at hospitals continues to rise, it is not keeping pace with demand as approximately 10,000 positions remain vacant in Wisconsin hospitals across the state. In fact, vacancy rates increased for all 17 health care positions that we track – and nearly doubled overall from 5.3% in 2020 to 9.9% in 2021. Even worse, demographics are working against health care, as the highest utilizers of health care are those aged 65 and older who are also retiring from the healthcare workforce. It will be seven years from now when the last baby boomers turn 65, and the ‘Silver Tsunami’ of retirements will begin to recede, but the impact of increased demand on the healthcare workforce will persist for another decade or more; we have yet to experience the full impact of the baby boom generation on the demand for health care and, thus, our health care workforce.

Fortunately, we have had great partners in the Wisconsin Legislature and the Evers Administration. When faced with long backlogs in licensure for out-of-state health care workers, largely stemming from challenges surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the legislature passed and Governor Evers signed 2021 Act 10. This legislation allowed health care professionals licensed and in good standing from another state to begin practicing immediately while they waited for DSPS to process their license.

I’m proud to report that this legislation has been a tremendous success, helping us to recruit and staff up to better meet health care demand. Whereas we previously had hospitals report that they missed out on hiring a qualified health care professional because another state beat Wisconsin to the punch in issuing them a license, Wisconsin is now seen as a model for other states to emulate.

In fact, this legislation has worked so well that our hospitals began wondering if we could duplicate this innovative process for new graduates. As many of you know, there tends to be bi-annual licensure backlogs when new classes graduate both at the beginning of summer and end of the year. The Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) has made efforts to alleviate these challenges under the Evers Administration, partly by implementing a new, and long overdue, electronic licensure system. Despite this forward-thinking measure, licensure backlogs still remain, especially when a high volume of applications arrive during graduation season. These backlogs could be greatly reduced by modeling a fast-track process for new graduates on the process already implement for Wisconsin 2021 Act 10.

SB 158 would do just that, by allowing new graduates of health care training programs that have passed their required national exam and cleared a criminal background check to begin practicing immediately if they have attested to completing everything required for licensure and also have an employer offer them a job. The employer would also have to provide an attestation that the prospective employee has met all requirements for licensure, to the best of their knowledge. New graduate licensure requirements --- graduation, passing a national licensure exam and a caregiver background check --- are components that health care employers already have processes in place to verify.

We are optimistic that this reform will greatly reduce the number of people contacting their legislators to gain DSPS's assistance with fast-tracking their applications – a process which currently requires DSPS's licensure staff to interrupt their normal workflow to divert attention to such applications. Additionally, it will reduce the time crunch DSPS staff find themselves in when a bolus of new graduates apply for licensure and need to obtain it quickly to meet hiring deadlines.

It is important to note that safeguards would remain in this process. DSPS would still be in charge of verifying that all the information applicants and third parties have submitted is accurate, and they would remain responsible for issuing them a permanent license once they deem an application to be complete. Health care employers would be responsible for attesting to the fact that they believe a new graduate is fit to practice. Fortunately, hospitals and health systems already undergo a rigorous credentialing process for new applicants prior to offering them a job, and partner the new employee with an experienced peer when they start working.

Like SB 158, SB 193 and SB 194 were ideas that originated in the Legislative Council Study Committee on Occupational Licensure. WHA was privileged to serve on this committee along with legislators and members of the public, and equally pleased to see the committee unanimously recommend SB 193 and SB 194 for introduction. SB 193 will safely extend renewal timeframes from 2 to 4 years to ease the renewal burden on providers while also giving DSPS the flexibility to determine when renewals will occur and better load-level the work of the department. DSPS will be able to look at the number of renewals and the complexity of the profession's renewal process, and divide the work to break down current bottlenecks.

SB 194 builds on the previously mentioned 2021 Act 10, which allowed health care practitioners licensed and in good standing from another state to begin practicing immediately while DSPS processes their full licensure application. WHA supports the provisions in SB 194 that correct the unintended exclusion of radiographers and other health care professions from being eligible for this streamlined process.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of these important proposals. We urge you to support them so we can build on the positive, bipartisan reforms Governor Evers and the Legislature have already begun and help grow and sustain the workforce hospitals and health systems need to meet growing demand for care.



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**Senate Committee on Licensing, Constitution and Federalism
Support for SB158
Submitted by Leigh Larson, MS
May 24, 2023**

Chairperson Jacque and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 158 (SB158). I am sorry I cannot attend in-person due to other commitments, but I hope you consider the merits of SB158 based on my written comments. My name is Leigh Larson. I am the Director of Graduate Medical Education and Medical Staff Administration for UW Health. I have been in my current role for almost nine years. We support SB158 because it would provide a mechanism to efficiently credential our health care professionals moving from education to their first Wisconsin license; thereby allowing them to begin serving patients more quickly.

Legislation passed in 2021 allows health care professionals licensed in another state to immediately practice in Wisconsin while they seek approval of their regular license. While this has been a very helpful option, many of our new health care professionals are not covered under this provision as they are coming out of training programs and applying for their first Wisconsin license. In 2022, out of 220 newly hired resident and fellow physicians at UW Health, only 20 qualified for a temporary license under 2021 Act 10. Other health care occupations are similarly challenged.

Most of our health care professionals begin work with us during the summer shortly after graduation leading to a small window of time during which they all need to be licensed. Resident and fellow physicians have start dates based on their specialty that are consistent nationwide, all within a few weeks of each other in June and July. Incorporating a temporary license option for those coming out of training would allow them to start on-time, ensuring timeliness and continuity of patient care. As one physician completes training and leaves, another takes their place providing seamless coverage and care for our patients. Delays in licensing for any of our health care professionals cause a gap in the care team which may lead to delays for patients in accessing care.

Health care is a very regulated industry and those of us involved in the credentialing of our workforce take these regulations by the State and agencies such as CMS and the Joint Commission very seriously. We already complete the credentialing requirements in SB158 attested to by the employer as part of the previously mentioned regulatory requirements. In my department at UW Health, I am not aware of any physician denied a license by DSPS in my tenure, so the risk to patient safety should be very low.

Furthermore, I believe SB158 stands to benefit the backlog at DSPS. Though there will be some additional work to grant a temporary license, the new temporary license will allow staff at DSPS to spread out the more in-depth work needed to issue regular licenses. The temporary license would drastically reduce the many contacts to DSPS that applicants and employers make checking on the status of their regular license. This saves work and stress for all involved. Most importantly, ensuring timely licensing provides better access to health care for residents of Wisconsin.

For these reasons, I ask for your support and encourage you to advance Senate Bill 158 out of committee. Thank you for your time and interest.



Wisconsin Society of Radiologic Technologists

May 19, 2023

Dear Chairperson Senator Jacque, Vice Chair Senator Bradley, and all members of the Senate Committee on Licensing, Constitution and Federalism.

Please accept this testimony for the hearing on Senate Bills 158, 193 and 194 from the Wisconsin Society of Radiologic Technologists. Thank you for this opportunity to offer input on this important legislation.

The Wisconsin Society of Radiologic Technologists (WSRT) is the professional organization of radiologic technologists in the state of Wisconsin, and an affiliate of the American Society of Radiologic Technologists. Radiologic Technologists are the gatekeepers of Standard of Care diagnostic imaging by providing optimum medical image quality for patients, at the lowest possible radiation exposure. The Wisconsin legislature recognized that there is a clear public health and safety benefit to licensing radiologic technologists by passing 2009 Wisconsin Act 106, enacted on February 4, 2010. Radiologic licensure ensures the trusting patient population of Wisconsin that the administration of diagnostic x-ray radiation is performed by qualified personnel in all health care settings.

The WSRT is in strong support of the provisions of SB 158. The WSRT has heard concerns over the past few years about delays in the issuance of licenses for new graduates of Wisconsin's radiography education programs. Wisconsin's system of hospital based and technical school radiography education programs graduate between 350-400 radiographers each year. Each of these graduates must pass a national test administered by the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists. The provisions of SB 158 provide a solution that allows the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) to issue these new graduates a provisional license while the DSPS processes the application for permanent licensure.

The WSRT also supports the provisions of SB 194 that address the provisional licensure of radiographers licensed in other states. Demands in the health care market over the past few years have led to health care providers hiring temporary radiographers to fill vacancies in radiology departments. Often radiographers from other licensed states fill these vacancies, and delays in licensing affect the current understaffed radiology departments, as well as the timeliness of patient care. Allowing licensed radiographers from other states to work with a provisional license, like with the new graduates addressed in SB 158, would provide a working solution for delays that might have otherwise caused the temporary radiographers to pass on an assignment in Wisconsin for one in another state.

The WSRT appreciates that both SB 158 and SB 194 uphold the principles of the Chapter 462, created by the licensure law, and ensures that properly vetted personnel are employed in the field. Health care employers in Wisconsin would be very pleased to see the provisions of both bills enacted to enable qualified personnel to provide care while waiting for permanent licensure.

WSRT also adds support for SB 193, changing the renewal period for licenses from the current two years to four years. Extending the renewal period from two years to four years while doubling the continuing education requirement will reduce the financial impact on license holders. This change is welcomed by many I have spoken with since becoming aware of the bill. The WSRT feels the impact of changing the frequency of renewal will have a positive impact on radiographers and their families, while not fundamentally changing our licensure requirement or negatively affecting patient care.

We thank this committee and the legislators who introduced and cosponsored this good-sense legislation for the promotion of quality and safe patient care in Wisconsin by credentialed and licensed individuals.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Vander Meulen B.A, R.T., (R)
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