



September 7, 2021

Eric Borgerding
President & CEO
Wisconsin Hospital Association
5510 Research Park Drive
PO Box 259038
Madison, WI 53725-9038

Dear Mr. Borgerding,

Thank you for contacting me concerning staffing shortages experienced by your membership.

Over the course of the pandemic, the Department of Safety and Professional Service has worked quickly to pivot alongside our healthcare partners. We have worked tirelessly to implement needed emergency rules and new statutes to provide our partners the flexibility and tools necessary to fight the pandemic. We have been working closely with colleagues throughout the administration and in the healthcare industry, and I greatly appreciate our partnership on the passage and implementation of Act 10 credentials.

Indeed, we are incredibly proud of working alongside the Wisconsin Hospital Association and our other healthcare partners during these unprecedented times. I agree with the need to prioritize healthcare licensure. That is why since the start of the pandemic the department has prioritized healthcare licensure. Unfortunately, as you well know, the department has perpetually lacked the staff necessary to respond to peak volume, which occurs between April and September. This period is a challenge for us during normal times and is especially so now as we run a parallel pandemic process that was developed and implemented with no increase in staff or other resources.

That is why during budget process the governor requested ten additional positions to handle our growing volume of credentialing work. Ultimately, the budget presented to the governor added three, not ten, positions. While we are happy to have three new staff members joining this division, it is well short of the number required to expeditiously handle the volume of work.

Since the passage of the budget, we have been working to identify new tools and resources to aid our work. We have approved overtime for existing staff to focus on healthcare licenses. Like our partners in healthcare, we have been exploring the use of staffing agencies. However, workforce shortages also extend to the staffing agencies utilized by the department.

In your letter you identified how it is important that documents and data be quickly received and input to ensure efficient communication back to applicants. Licensure is a highly iterative process, particularly for our health professions. We recognize that communication is vital as we work with applicants to obtain all the information required to adjudicate their application for licensure.

Currently, initial licensure is a manual process which consists of the intake of paper documents, emails and faxes, inputting them in the system, and then manually associating them with an individual applicant. The intake of supporting documentation is responsible for approximately fifteen percent of the work associated with an

application. We identified the management of these documents as a critical task and have been evaluating technological tools which might aid staff in this task. This was included it as a part of the governor's 2021-2023 budget, along with several other small technology projects such as the implementation of new call center software. Unfortunately, this item was not fully funded. The department must prioritize call center software upgrades to put an end to the daily system crashes that plague current operations.

Additionally, the Department of Safety and Professional Services has just concluded the first part of a multi-year, multi-phase technology platform upgrade which began under Governor Scott Walker. The first phase of this upgrade was primarily directed at our Division of Industry Services, which supports Wisconsin's construction industry. With the conclusion of the first phase, we were able to re-evaluate agency needs. Healthcare licensure was originally designated towards the end of the upgrade program. However, we have determined that healthcare licensure will be prioritized during the next phase of development.

I know that agency personnel were able to meet recently with your staff and discuss new ways in which we might partner to align processes and ensure those who are eligible for licensure and have submitted all required documentation can be quickly credentialed. I appreciate this continued partnership and our collaboration to aid the licensure process. The department will continue to work diligently to identify resources and partner with organizations and other stakeholders to meet industry needs while ensuring the safety and competency of our licensed workforce.

Please do not hesitate to reach out as we continue to work together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dawn B. Crim".

Dawn B. Crim
Secretary-designee