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Thank you to the authors and co-sponsors of Senate Bill 417. Thank you, Senator Vukmir and the members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, for allowing me the opportunity to speak in favor of enacting the enhanced nurse licensure compact in Wisconsin.

There are 25 states in the original nurse licensure compact which was implemented in January of 2000. The enhanced compact was created to encourage more states to join. There are currently 26 member states in the enhanced compact. Key revisions include a requirement for a federal criminal background check and uniform licensure requirements such as a valid social security number, graduation from an approved education program, and successful completion of an entry level exam. While the additions promote safe patient care, they are not onerous or unreasonable.

As current chair of the Wisconsin Board of Nursing, I represent the members of the board and many of the nurses throughout the state when I urge you to support this legislation. On June 8th, the Board of Nursing held an informational hearing on the proposed nurse licensure compact. We received written feedback from 90 people prior to the hearing. Of those who took the time to respond, 78 people supported the enhanced nurse licensure compact, nine did not indicate a clear preference, and three were opposed. Several themes emerged. The benefits of travel nursing to individuals, healthcare organizations, the economy, and quality patient care were emphasized by many respondents. Several nurses also pointed out that the compact is crucial during times of disaster. Those who had an opinion on the requirement for a federal criminal background check spoke in favor of it as a way to further protect public health and safety. Nurses with a spouse in the military have found the need to obtain licensure in states not participating in the current compact to be burdensome and costly. Nurses who provide telehealth services and those employed by schools or integrated health care systems that cross state borders value their multistate licenses. They indicated a strong desire to preserve the ability to work in multiple states with their Wisconsin licenses. Dr. Mike Thompson, Deputy State Superintendent, expressed his support of the enhanced nurse licensure compact on behalf of the Department of Public Instruction. The enhanced compact allows school nurses to continue to provide care for students with significant health conditions participating in out-of-state field trips.

Public comment provided by the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative, Wisconsin Hospital Association, Wisconsin Nurses Association, and various health systems during the hearing was overwhelmingly in support of the enhanced compact. After considering all of the feedback, the Board of Nursing unanimously voted to support joining the enhanced nurse licensure compact.

Enactment of this bill must be expedited to ensure a smooth transition into the new compact.

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