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Legislative Council Study Committee on Occupational Licenses Holds First Hearing

The Wisconsin Legislative Council Study Committee on Occupational Licenses held its first hearing on Tuesday, Aug. 2. The committee, which is comprised of four legislators and five members of the public, including WHA's SVP Workforce and Clinical Practice Ann Zenk, is tasked with reviewing and improving occupational licensure processes in Wisconsin.

The committee heard presentations from the Wisconsin Legislative Council, the Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau, the National Conference on State Legislatures, and the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS). The presentations included a look at new policies states have enacted in recent years, such as more portable licensure via compacts, reciprocity agreements, endorsement, or universal licensure recognition policies.

New DSPS Secretary-designee Dan Hereth and Legislative Liaison Mike Tierney noted they have been working hard to reduce the time it takes for people to obtain licensure and praised WHA and its members for working with them to improve their new electronic licensure process. Both DSPS leaders noted the collaborative relationship they have with WHA and its members and their work to prioritize licensure for health care practitioners when they become aware of delays either from WHA, its members, or legislative offices.

Zenk suggested the committee investigate policies like 2021 Wisconsin Act 10, which allows health care practitioners licensed and in good standing in another state to begin practicing immediately in Wisconsin while their license is pending with DSPS. "This has really been a tremendous tool for health care to help us get more people working in Wisconsin during one of the most significant workforce shortages we've faced in many, many years," said Zenk. "We should be exploring how we can expand this for new graduates and for other sectors that could also benefit." The committee was provided with this suggestion and others in a memo submitted to the Study Committee by WHA on the Impact of Licensure Processes on the Health Care Workforce.

Rep. Shae Sortwell, who serves as Vice Chair of the Committee and is also the current chair of the Assembly Committee on Regulatory Licensing Reform, expressed his interest in having the committee better understand ways the government is duplicating work the private sector is already doing. He cited the extensive credentialing process Wisconsin hospitals already do as something he would like to better understand. Sen. Rob Stafsholt, who chairs the committee, said he looked forward to delving more into these ideas during the next meeting, scheduled for Sept. 27.

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