

Badger Institute: Grace to testify today on licensing reform

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Policy Analyst Julie Grace will testify today before the Assembly Committee on Regulatory Licensing Reform on bill to streamline process of obtaining an occupational license in Wisconsin

Representative Sortwell and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding this hearing today and for allowing me to testify in support of [Assembly Bill 218](#), which would streamline the state's licensing process. As most of you know, we have over the years conducted research and told stories of many people affected by the state's burdensome licensing process and requirements. Too many times, we've heard that Wisconsinites who simply want to work are either turned away or forced to wait – losing significant income while enduring stress, discouragement and confusion – before they can obtain a license to enter or return to their desired field.

Licensing impacts nearly a fifth of Wisconsin's workforce, requiring more than one million aspiring workers to seek government permission slips in the form of licenses, certifications, registrations or permits.

In a moment, I'll introduce [Meggan Thompson](#), who unfortunately experienced burdensome and pointless hurdles to obtaining her social work license after practicing in California for more than a decade. First, I'll briefly address AB 218, which would give the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) the authority to recommend granting or denying an application for licensure to the respective licensing board. If DSPS recommends approving the application, the board has 10 days to act, or the application is approved.

In our report, [Absence and Violation](#), we found that most of Wisconsin's licensing boards very rarely meet – sometimes only quarterly or less. When the boards do meet, much of their activity often takes place in private or closed session. Speeding up and opening up this process by requiring a licensing board to act on an application within 10 days after DSPS' recommendation would alleviate some of the pressures placed on licensing boards. More importantly, it would allow more Wisconsinites to get to work much sooner.

I'd now like to introduce Meggan Thompson, who I believe, could have benefited from this proposed legislation if it was a law when she moved to Wisconsin in 2018. Meggan moved here with her family in pursuit of a better quality of life and lower cost of living. She earned a master's degree in social work from the University of Southern California (USC), practiced in the field, and for years has taught online courses at USC.

But none of this was good enough for Wisconsin, even during the COVID crisis, where she had to wait more than a year to get her license. Meanwhile, she could have served so many people facing mental illness, addiction, or other pandemic-related challenges. No one should have to forgo a year of income or the ability to practice their profession because of hurdles imposed by the state or rules established by those already practicing in the field. We should be making it easier, not harder, for people like Meggan to live and work here in our state. I'd now like to invite Meggan to share with us a bit more of her story.

Following Meggan's testimony, we're both willing to answer any questions. Again, thank you for holding this hearing today and for considering this important bill that we believe would impact many Wisconsinites, who, like Meggan, simply want to work.

Read more about Meggan Thompson's story [here](#).