

DSPS: Gov. Evers signs legislation giving greater flexibility in license decisions

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MADISON, Wis. – Earlier today Gov. Tony Evers signed Assembly Bill 218 into law. The legislation allows for the automatic approval or denial of certain applications presented to occupational boards after a ten-day review window. This will enable boards to better prioritize applications and focus their attention on those requiring the most evaluation. In some cases, particularly during periods of peak volume, it will improve staff efficiency and lead to faster decisions for applicants.

“This legislation gives our department another tool to use in our credentialing process,” said DSPS Secretary Dawn Crim.

Currently, some occupational boards delegate decision-making authority to DSPS. In those cases, when DSPS staff determine that all requirements are satisfied, staff can issue the credential. Alternately, if staff are confident that the requirements are not satisfied, they can deny the application. Other boards do not delegate that authority to the department. In those instances, DSPS staff deliver applications and recommendations to the appropriate board liaison responsible for returning decisions to DSPS. In these instances, DSPS staff cannot issue or deny credentials until the board liaison returns a decision.

Occasionally, board liaisons encounter challenges that affect how quickly they can respond. These include work demands or life events—like a car accident that puts someone in the hospital. These situations could be exacerbated by periods in the year when volume is high for a particular profession (e.g. right after graduation or when licensing exam scores are released). If a board liaison is out of commission or has limited capacity to deal with board business, it is sometimes not possible to

appoint an alternate until the next board meeting, which may be weeks away. These situations can lead to longer wait times for all applicants.

This legislation creates an alternate approval process for certain applications. These licenses will be issued ten business days after the board liaison receives the files if the liaison has not already issued a decision or taken certain other action.

The legislation was proposed by Senator Dale Kooyenga (R-Brookfield) and co-sponsored by Senator LaTonya Johnson (D-Milwaukee).

Secretary Crim says the legislation is another step in the right direction for the agency that issues more than 240 unique credentials and supports more than 100 occupational boards, councils, and committees. "This is the kind of flexibility we need to respond to the ever-increasing volume of applications our agency handles every year," she said.

The Department of Safety and Professional Services issues more than 240 unique licenses, administers dozens of boards and councils that regulate professions, enforces state building codes, runs the state fire prevention program, and maintains the award-winning Wisconsin Enhanced Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which is a key tool in the multi-faceted public health campaign to address the opioid epidemic. A fee-based agency, the Department of Safety and Professional Services is self-sustaining and receives no general fund tax dollars for its day-to-day operations. With five offices and 250 employees throughout Wisconsin, DSPS collaborates with constituents and stakeholders across a wide range of industries to promote safety and advance the economy.