

WisGOP: ICYMI - Gov. Evers' licensing crisis hurts respiratory therapists

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[Madison, WI] - In case you missed it, Tony Evers' state licensing crisis is preventing respiratory therapists - critical health care workers who served at the front lines during COVID-19 - from getting the licenses they need to do their jobs.

According to one spring college graduate who is still awaiting her license, **“when she was actually able to reach a DSPS official, Cumber was told the agency was transitioning from a paper-based to an electronic filing system. She was told conflicting information about how she was supposed to complete her required ethics examination, and she said it took months before her online file was updated. Cumber even paid an additional fee to expedite her license. DSPS quickly cashed her checks. She’s still waiting for her license.”**

Meanwhile, as Wisconsin businesses struggle with a labor shortage exacerbated by his administration's failures, Evers' response has constituted setting up an auto-reply email to frustrated workers that blames the Legislature for his dysfunctional state agency. Wisconsin deserves a governor who will step up to plate when his administration fails - not point fingers.

Read more from Empower Wisconsin [below](#):

Evers' licensing crisis hits respiratory health
[Empower Wisconsin](#)

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Few are on the COVID-19 front lines quite like respiratory therapists. Over the past two and a half years, these unsung heroes have been overworked and overexposed to a respiratory disease that has claimed nearly 15,000 lives in Wisconsin, more than 1 million nationwide.

The ongoing licensing crisis at Gov. Tony Evers' dysfunctional Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) has made life even harder for these critical health care workers.

Alexis Cumber is among a long list of spring graduates still waiting for her respiratory therapist license to be processed by DSPS, buried under a backlog of professional credential applications. Cumber, warned of the long delays by her college instructors, said she began the application process in February.

When she was actually able to reach a DSPS official, Cumber was told the agency was transitioning from a paper-based to an electronic filing system. She was told conflicting information about how she was supposed to complete her required ethics examination, and she said it took months before her online file was updated.

Cumber even paid an additional fee to expedite her license. DSPS quickly cashed her checks. She's still waiting for her license.

"It's frustrating," she said. "A lot of these people have taken out student loans. You're supposed to start paying for those within six months of graduating. How are we able to do so?"

[...]

As Empower Wisconsin has detailed in a series reports, The license backlog has left untold numbers of health care workers, electricians, cosmetologists, you name it, waiting months, some more than a year, for their credentials.

When frustrated professionals waiting for their long-delayed licenses reach out to Evers' office for help, they get an automatic email — a political screed blaming the Republican-controlled Legislature for Wisconsin's licensing crisis.

"Since its creation in 2011, DSPS has been understaffed, underfunded, and under resourced, which has set the stage for the situation the agency finds itself in today. In short, DSPS is staffed at a dire level," the email from Evers claims. It makes a lot of claims in a purely political, CYA message, including the charge that the "State

Legislature has decided to take no action to resolve this situation...”

The Legislature in July 2021 set aside \$5 million for system upgrades. DSPS officials did not seek the funding until recently. And Evers waited until early this year to allocate a portion of the billions of dollars he controls in federal COVID relief aid to deal with the backlog.

Two years into the licensing crisis, the DSPS customer service counter at its Madison headquarters was still only open until 12:30 p.m. daily.