

Sens. Hesselbein and Carpenter, Reps. Hong and Clancy: Committee warns Republican-backed audit could exacerbate delays in license processing and jeopardize licensing modernization efforts, call for audit co-chairs to prepare mitigation plan before audit approval

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MADISON — Members of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee today in a letter to committee co-chairs Sen. Eric Wimberger and Rep. Robert Wittke warned a Republican-backed licensing audit could divert limited available resources away from license and credential processing, cause delays in now-improved license and credential processing times, and potentially slow modernization efforts to improve the state's licensing and credential application system.

“We write today to raise concerns about the potential day-to-day consequences of your plan to conduct a professional license processing audit at the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS). As you are well aware, the DSPS is already understaffed and under-resourced and, given the limited resources available at the department as it is, conducting this audit will almost certainly require diverting those limited existing resources away from processing licenses and credentials and servicing professional organizations and workers across our state,” the

Democratic members of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee began in their letter.

“Ironically, and despite DSPS’ ongoing effort to modernize and improve the licensing and credentialing process without any meaningful support or assistance from this Legislature, you have now decided to audit DSPS after, apparently, devoting an entire year’s worth of study committee work to preparing solutions on this very issue,” the letter continues. **“The Legislature has already requested massive amount of information from DSPS. Our offices have made inquiries on thousands of cases. We’ve had informational hearings. We’ve already had two different study committees dedicate their time to looking at the issues at DSPS this past summer. And all of this is to say nothing of the other study committees or other efforts that occurred even prior to the last two years.**

“All of this work has repeatedly and consistently underscored what has been immediately obvious for years, has been reaffirmed and reiterated to this Legislature time and time again over the course of the last decade, and remains fundamentally clear today: DSPS needs additional staffing and resources support, and that will require legislative approval and action.”

In the letter to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee co-chairs, four committee members likewise expressed concern about the possibility that an effort to conduct this audit now comes with the **“potential cost of further delaying processing of licenses and credentials, hindering the expeditious modernization efforts that are already underway, and wasting more taxpayer dollars in search of a solution that is already readily apparent and has been for years.”**

To that end, committee members also requested that Republican committee members to work expeditiously in preparing and providing a mitigation plan in writing and prior to approving the audit will take to ensure it will not either **“impede or divert staff resources from processing licenses or credentials that would necessarily cause delays license and credential processing”** or **“jeopardize the progress the department is presently making on its ongoing modernization effort.”**

Additionally, the committee members called for Republicans’ mitigation plan to be made available expeditiously to ensure professionals and professional

organizations have the opportunity to consider the plan and provide input and feedback as to how a potential audit might affect their day-to-day work.

“We expect such a plan will be provided to us in writing and will be made available for public comment and consideration prior to approving this proposed audit so that professional organizations, license and credential holders, and others understand the safeguards the Committee will be putting in place to ensure this audit will not negatively affect the progress the department has made on improving efficiency and modernizing its outdated technology.”

“Finally taking the action that has long been necessary and getting the department the resources they need to be successful should be our top priority as legislators. In the meantime, if an audit is going to be conducted, then there must be specific measures the Committee is prepared to take to ensure this decision will not get in the way of the important work the department is doing to issue Wisconsinites their licenses,” the letter concludes.

A copy of the letter to Joint Legislative Audit Committee co-chairs is attached.