



Testimony of Department of Safety and Professional Services

Secretary Laura Gutiérrez
Joint Committee on Finance
March 28, 2017

Honored co-chairs Darling and Nygren and distinguished members of the committee – thank you for the opportunity to speak with you here today.

My name is Laura Gutiérrez, the Secretary-elect for the Department of Safety and Professional Services.

Over its six years of existence, DSPS has been an agency focused on efficiency, reform and safety. Since the Department of Regulation and Licensing merged with the Department of Commerce through the 2011-2012 budget, the state saved millions of dollars and created a cohesive agency to save taxpayer resources and provide a single point of contact for the public.

DSPS is responsible for ensuring the safe and competent practice of licensed professionals in Wisconsin and administers and enforces laws to ensure safe and sanitary conditions in public and private buildings.

We also provide centralized administrative services to nearly 100 boards, councils and advisory committees, all with varying levels of responsibility and oversight based on statutory provisions. We are the home to many programs as it relates to public safety, economic growth, and stability and look forward to continuing to build on that mission.

There have been many positive changes and enhancements at DSPS over the years that have allowed the agency to be more efficient, effective and accountable.

Our Online License Verification System and Electronic Compliance Statement System have reduced turnaround time for our customers from five business days to 24 hours.

We have recently implemented the use of GovDelivery for our credential holders, moving from a paper license renewal notification to electronic renewal notifications, and also executed a Credential and License List Purchasing System to electronically pull lists of our credential holders for use by our stakeholders and government entities.

DSPS is also at the forefront of economic stability. In 2016, DSPS performed over 15,000 plan reviews as compared to over 12,000 in 2011; an increase of 26 percent. Shovels are going in the ground and Wisconsin is working.

We remain committed to public safety and continue to work diligently to reduce unnecessary regulations and high costs of operation. As we move forward, I am excited about the opportunities available to the Department in this next budget to continue to allow us to serve and protect Wisconsin's citizens.

Under Governor Walker's leadership, there have been vast improvements in ensuring that everyone who wants a job can get a job.

Over the last 20 years, occupational licensure has increased by 34 percent. We currently license more than 370,000 individuals in 166 different professions. The current budget proposal includes the creation of a council

that will look at all aspects related to licensure, including fee structures, in an effort to continue to remove the red tape that prohibits the people of Wisconsin entering the workforce, while maintaining safety and accountability.

The goal of the council proposed in this budget is not to discuss merits of professions, rather ensure that the Government doesn't restrict people from working in Wisconsin. I look forward to leading and guiding the council as its non-voting Chair to construct policy, collaborate with the fellow council members and have thoughtful dialogue about all of our licensed professions. It is our intention that together, we will remove barriers to workforce entry.

In the last ten years, the number of opioid overdose deaths has nearly doubled, to nearly 11 in every 100,000 deaths. We want to thank you for passing the HOPE legislation which enabled the creation of our Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, or PDMP.

The PDMP database is a tool that helps healthcare professionals make more informed decisions about prescribing and dispensing all controlled prescription drugs. It stores over 48 million prescription records submitted by over 2,000 pharmacies and dispensing practitioners, with an average of nearly 5,000 queries performed on the system each day.

In the last report released by the Controlled Substances Board, the number of opioid doses dispensed in quarter four of 2016 was 11 million fewer as compared to the same time period in 2015.

The work we have done thus far in addition to this budget ensures the Department can continue to serve Wisconsin's people and fight prescription drug abuse, misuse and diversion. Through added resources, we will guarantee administrative and enforcement services are consistently handled quickly and receive great attention to detail as it is the public's best interest.

We are proud to house this important program that has become the new national standard for PDMPs across the country, and we are pleased that this budget allows us to continue to combat the prescription drug abuse epidemic across our state.

With a background in both the public and private sectors, I understand the importance of the public's needs and the value in making government efficient and accountable, not burdensome. As a previous school administrator, I bring a focus on efficiency, accountability, and reform, which will aid this agency in assuming the duties of the Educational Approval Board.

DSPS has the capacity to perform and carry out the duties of the EAB, and will utilize the six and a half designated full time employees who are focused on the EAB, to maintain programming and continue existing functions. Throughout this transition, we will ensure student safety and school accountability remains uncompromised, as it exists today.

The transition of the EAB to DSPS makes sense; our agency has experience dealing with complaints, issuing licenses, storing records, and providing continuing education. With my background as an educator and the knowledge of the agency, we are poised to enable this consolidation and remove an additional layer of bureaucracy.

This budget has my full support as it stands to reform licensure, hold schools accountable, break down barriers to work, and continue to protect the people of Wisconsin. I am looking forward to working with Governor Walker, the Legislature and our staff at DSPS to implement the benefits of this budget.

Once again, thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am available and willing to take any questions you may have.