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Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 428 & Senate Bill 399

*Assembly Committee on Rural Development & Senate Committee on Elections, Ethics
and Rural Issues*

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Thank you, Madam Chairs and committee members for holding this public hearing today and giving me the opportunity to speak to you in support of Assembly Bill (AB) 428 and Senate Bill (SB) 399. I would like to thank Senator Petrowski for working with me on this important legislation.

There is nothing quite like a Wisconsin summer. Our many lakes, streams, and forests allow our state to offer some of the best outdoor recreational opportunities in the world and make Wisconsin a great place to spend a week or two away at camp. Kids come from all around the world to attend summer camps in Wisconsin. These camps are located in all corners of the state and are an important part of the state and local economy.

Recreational activities carry the risk of injury and camp activities are no exception. Many summer camps rely on volunteer doctors who give a few weeks of their summer to serve as a camp doctor. Camp doctors ensure the safety of both campers and staff. While the vast majority of injuries treated by a camp doctor are minor (i.e. rashes, twisted ankles), having a doctor on hand provides an extra level of care that should be encouraged.

Many physicians who volunteer as a camp doctor are licensed in another state. Current law requires these very capable doctors to obtain a temporary license from the State of Wisconsin even though they are only volunteering for a few weeks. Many of the requirements to receive this temporary licensure are very time consuming and camps are finding it harder to find physicians who are willing to go through this lengthy process just to volunteer for a short time. Some camp doctors have said that it is more work to obtain the temporary license than to work at the camp itself.

AB 428/SB 399 seeks to solve this problem by allowing a physician licensed in another state or territory of the United States or a foreign country or province to practice at a camp in Wisconsin for up to 90 working days in a year. To qualify for this exemption, the licensure standards where the physician is licensed must be substantially equivalent to those in Wisconsin. Also, a physician operating under this exemption would only be permitted to treat campers and staff.

This bill is a redraft of the amended version of 2017 Assembly Bill 870 which was approved by the Assembly by a voice vote late last session. The only change to the bill that passed the Assembly last session is an increase to the length of the exemption from 20 days to 90 days. This change was made at the request of some summer camps that have longer camp programs where their camp doctor may be at camp for several weeks.

Also, at the request of the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS), we have offered a simple amendment to the bill that would allow the emergency rules to remain in effect until May 1, 2021. This change is necessary to allow DSPS enough time to get their permanent rules into place before the emergency rules expire.

Madam Chairs and members, I ask for your support of this legislation and thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today.