

Professional Counselor Section
4/19/2023 Additional Materials
Item F. Board Chair Meeting and Options to Address Department Resources
1) Review of Letter to Legislature Regarding Agency Resources

Department of Safety and Professional Services
Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work Examining Board
Licensed Professional Counselor Section
4822 Madison Yards Way
Madison, WI 53705

Wisconsin State Legislature
Joint Committee on Finance
Representative Born, Co-Chair
P.O. Box 8952
Madison WI 53708

Dear Honorable Representative Born,

My name is Dr. Tammy Scheidegger, and I am a member of the Licensed Professional Counselor Section of the Wisconsin Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work Examining Board. On behalf of the members of our section of the Joint Board, I am writing to urge you to increase funding for the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DPS).

As you may know, DPS is responsible for “...ensuring the safe and competent practice of licensed professionals in Wisconsin. DPS] regulates more than 200 distinct types of credentials” (DPS Website). To competently carry out the responsibilities granted to DPS per the WI state constitution, the agency needs to be adequately funded to ensure that professional license-holders and those seeking to become license holders can apply and renew licenses in a timely manner. The inability of the Wisconsin State Legislature to adequately fund DPS, has led to exceedingly long wait times for license seekers as well as the renewal of certain license holders.

I am confident you recognize Wisconsin is in a widespread mental health crisis. Children and adults find themselves on long waitlists just to access critical mental health services, while expertly trained, qualified counselors cannot get through the application and issuance process because the Department of Safety and Professional Services is understaffed. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported in December of 2021 that although the workload of the credentialing staff at DPS had doubled from processing an estimated 57,000 application (during 2013 – 2015) to processing an estimated 123,000 applications (during 2019-2021), requests that were granted for increased staff last year barely scratched the surface of what was and is needed to process applications. According to the National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI), 41.8% of Wisconsinites age 12-17 who have depression did not receive any care last in the last year, and 18.6% of adults in Wisconsin were unable to get needed counseling or therapy (NAMI, Wisconsin Fact Sheet, 2021). Each delayed and unfilled licensed application potentially means that children and adults who need mental health services go untreated. Adequate staffing

would allow applicants to receive their licenses and would allow children and adults to receive services. I hope you see how important it is to adequately fund DSPS. One solution would be to allow DSPS to utilize fees associated with the application process to be used to hire full-time staff dedicated to processing applications.

The money invested in funding DSPS contributes to communities across our state, providing the public with highly trained, ethical, professional counselors to meet the current and emerging mental health needs of our communities. Adequately funding DSPS will not only stimulate the economy by putting qualified counseling professionals into the workforce in a timely manner, but it will also allow numerous applicants of other occupations to become gainfully employed without delay.

As members of the LP section of the Joint Board for Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work, we know first-hand that many licensees will benefit from the timely processing and issuance of licenses and renewals, and we encourage the Joint Committee on Finance, you and your co-chair, the Honorable Senator Marklein, to support the 2022 state budget requests that include increased staffing at DSPS. Please feel free to contact any member of the LPC section should you wish to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tammy Scheidegger, LPC, NCC (National Certified Counselor)
Department of Safety and Professional Services
Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work Examining Board
Licensed Professional Counselor Section
Secretary and Legislative Liaison
scheidet@mtmary.edu

Cynthia Brown
Department of Safety and Professional Services
Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work Examining Board
Licensed Professional Counselor Section
Chairperson

Andrea Simons, LPC
Department of Safety and Professional Services
Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work Examining Board
Licensed Professional Counselor Section
Vice Chairperson

Department of Safety and Professional Services
Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work Examining Board
Licensed Professional Counselor Section
4822 Madison Yards Way
Madison, WI 53705

Wisconsin State Legislature
Joint Committee on Finance
Senator Marklein, Co-Chair
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Honorable Senator Marklein,

My name is Dr. Tammy Scheidegger, and I am a member of the Licensed Professional Counselor Section of the Wisconsin Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work Examining Board. On behalf of the members of our section of the Joint Board, I am writing to urge you to increase funding for the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS).

As you may know, DSPS is responsible for "...ensuring the safe and competent practice of licensed professionals in Wisconsin. [DSPS] regulates more than 200 distinct types of credentials" (DSPS Website). To competently carry out the responsibilities granted to DSPS per the WI state constitution, the agency needs to be adequately funded to ensure that professional license-holders and those seeking to become license holders can apply and renew licenses in a timely manner. The inability of the Wisconsin State Legislature to adequately fund DSPS, has led to exceedingly long wait times for license seekers as well as the renewal of certain license holders.

I am confident you recognize Wisconsin is in a widespread mental health crisis. Children and adults find themselves on long waitlists just to access critical mental health services, while expertly trained, qualified counselors cannot get through the application and issuance process because the Department of Safety and Professional Services is understaffed. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported in December of 2021 that although the workload of the credentialing staff at DSPS had doubled from processing an estimated 57,000 application (during 2013 – 2015) to processing an estimated 123,000 applications (during 2019-2021), requests that were granted for increased staff, last year barely scratched the surface of what was and is needed to process applications. According to the National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI), 41.8% of Wisconsinites age 12-17 who have depression did not receive any care last in the last year, and 18.6% of adults in Wisconsin were unable to get needed counseling or therapy (NAMI, Wisconsin Fact Sheet, 2021). Each delayed and unfilled licensed application potentially means

that children and adults who need mental health services go untreated. Moreover, the mental health needs of the rural areas are being negatively impacted which causes a significant delay of services. Adequate staffing would allow applicants to receive their licenses and allow children and adults to receive services. I hope you see how important it is to adequately fund DSPS. One solution would be to allow DSPS to utilize fees associated with the application process to be used to hire full-time staff dedicated to processing applications.

The money invested in funding DSPS contributes to communities across our state, providing the public with highly trained, ethical, professional counselors to meet the current and emerging mental health needs of our communities. Adequately funding DSPS will not only stimulate the economy by putting qualified counseling professionals into the workforce in a timely manner, but it will also allow numerous applicants of other occupations to become gainfully employed without delay.

As members of the LPC section of the Joint Board for Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work, we know first-hand that many licensees will benefit from the timely processing and issuance of licenses and renewals, and we encourage the Joint Committee on Finance, you and your co-chair, the Honorable Representative Mr. Born, to support the 2022 state budget requests that include increased staffing at DSPS. Please feel free to contact any member of the LPC section should you wish to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tammy Scheidegger, LPC, NCC (National Certified Counselor)
Department of Safety and Professional Services
Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work Examining Board
Licensed Professional Counselor Section
Secretary and Legislative Liaison
scheidet@mtmary.edu

Cynthia Brown
Department of Safety and Professional Services
Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work Examining Board
Licensed Professional Counselor Section
Chairperson

Andrea Simons, LPC
Department of Safety and Professional Services
Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work Examining Board
Licensed Professional Counselor Section
Vice Chairperson