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Secretary-designee Dawn Crim Cuts Credential Fees, Saves Licensed Wisconsin Professionals \$10 Million

MADISON, Wis. – On her one-year anniversary as secretary-designee of the Department of Safety and Professional Services, Dawn Crim identifies her decision to cut credentialing fees—one of her first major actions—as a key accomplishment of 2019. Early in her administration, Crim introduced a new fee structure that resulted in lower fees for more than 75% of all licenses to be issued over the 2019–2021 biennium, for a total projected savings of nearly \$10.5 million.

Credential holders in 170 different occupations will experience either a reduction or no increase in their initial or renewal license fees. Changes affect a wide range of professions ranging from accounting and nursing to social work and tattooing. Some of the cuts are substantial. For example, initial licenses for cosmetologists dropped to \$11 from \$75 for an initial license or \$82 for a renewal. Real estate appraisers now pay \$16 instead of \$75 for an initial license or \$170 for a renewal. According to current agency records, the reductions are the first significant across-the-board cuts for credential holders.

Secretary Crim introduced the new fee schedule after reviewing a licensing study that the agency conducts every other year. “When we saw the results of the study, I made the decision to reduce fees,” Secretary-designee Crim says. “This affects around 361,000 Wisconsin license holders. Moving forward, very few will pay more than \$75 for initial licenses. Many will pay much less.”

The new fees took effect July 1, 2019 and are set through the next fiscal biennium, or July 1, 2021. The last time major adjustments were made to the schedule was during 2009–2011 biennium, when fees largely increased across the board. Since then, there have been only minor adjustments to fee structures, while several licensed professions or businesses have been introduced or transferred to the department.

Secretary Crim says better aligning license fees with the cost of operations demonstrates the department’s fiscal responsibility as well as a desire to minimize the financial burden experienced by licensees. It also demonstrates the agency’s commitment to promote policies and adopt practices that advance the Wisconsin economy.

“Licensed professions are well-paying and family-sustaining occupations, and we want the door to these careers to be open as wide as possible,” Secretary Crim says. “We want Wisconsin residents to seek and find professions where they can prosper. That is good for them, good for the economy, and good for the entire state.”

The new fee structure was one of several key accomplishments for Crim in her first year at the agency. The department issued nearly \$1 million in clean water grants to owners of septic systems, implemented new firefighter health and safety rules statewide, and cut legal review backlogs, all while ramping up the implementation of a multi-year and multi-phase technology conversion to integrate multiple systems and transition to more paperless operations.

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