



WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF NURSING

Licensing Subcommittee Minutes

June 18, 2024 1: 00 pm to 2: 00 pm

Committee Members: Dawn Morrell, BSN, RN, Chair
Adam Canary, LPN
Helen Myrick, Public Member
Yvonne Strader, RN, BSN, BSPA, MHA
Jacob Garcia, MBA, MSN, RN, PCCN

Staff: Amber Zawislak-Bielaski, MPH, Assistant Director of Licensing
Shana Johnny, MN, RN, Nurse Practice Consultant, Ad- Hoc
Karl Hoehn, JD, Assistant Director of Discipline- Legal Services
Miranda Bayne, Staff Attorney
Jessilyn Dagum, Policy Analyst
Lori Underwood, Licensing Supervisor

This meeting was digitally recorded to assist in the production of accurate minutes. All recordings are public records. The minutes of this meeting will be posted on our website after they have been approved at the **September 13, 2024**, WABON meeting. For a copy of the actual recording, please contact the Public Disclosure Records Center (PDRC) at PDRC@doh.wa.gov.

I. 1:00 PM Opening – Dawn Morrell, BSN, RN Subcommittee Chair

- **Roll Call**
- **Call to Order** - Board Member Dawn Morrell, Board Member Helen Myrick, Board Member Jacob Garcia, Dr. Shana Johnny, Mr. Karl Hoehn, Ms. Miranda Bayne, Ms. Kathy Bay, Ms. Amber Zawislak-Bielaski, Ms. Lori Underwood.

II. Standing Agenda Items

- **Announcements/Hot Topic/WABON Business Meeting Updates** - Board Member Morrell asked the committee if there were any topics or announcements to be discussed. Board member Myrick said that the highlight to mention was that the Board unanimously passed the motion to accept the nursing assistant responsibility in full and take to the 2025 legislation session. She continued by adding that if all goes well, the goal will be to implement by December 2026.
- **Approve Minutes for April 23, 2024** - Board Member Garcia moved with a second from Board Member Myrick to approve the minutes for April 23, 2024.

III. Old Business

- **Nurse Licensure Compact Implementation Update** – Ms. Zawislak-Bielaski shared the most recent data along with providing an overview on the different pathways of obtaining a Washington state multistate license. She further explained that in the month of May, we received five hundred, forty-six multistate license upgrade/conversion applications. In the previous months, we received one hundred ninety-four in January, one thousand, nine hundred fifty-eight in February, which was our highest month, and eight hundred, sixty-two

in March. In April, we received five hundred, eighty-eight multistate license upgrade applications. She continued to share that the research team would be adding the number of individuals who fully completed the process to the dashboard on our website. Ms. Zawislak-Bielaski also shared that looking at the data, it reflects that we had about three thousand total that had fully complete the licensure process and now hold a Washington multistate license. She then asked if the committee had any questions. Board member Garcia inquired if we were still trying to look into the trend between how many nurses we have per month and seeing if they are the percentage transitioning to the multistate license. Ms. Zawislak-Bielaski responded that we are still looking into that data as we work with our IT team to gather data based upon renewal trends. Board member Myrick asked if we are meeting the predicted expectation of new graduates and if they are applying for the multistate license more than the single state license. Ms. Zawislak-Bielaski responded that we are still trying to figure that one out. It was a little more difficult to track just because with the conversions, it was very easy to pull our report on how many nurses applied for the conversion because we have them applying and using a tracking credential that is associated with their license. We are working with our IT team to capture the new graduates' applications as they will not have that tracking credential. Online, it looks like just a regular single state license. Board member Morrell inquired about the FBI fingerprint background check process with the multistate license and asked if it was a barrier for nurses applying for a multistate license. Ms. Zawislak-Bielaski explained the process and shared that in the process, if we are still waiting for the completion of the FBI background check, we would still be able to issue a Temporary Practice Permit to the multistate license applicants. Ms. Zawislak-Bielaski concluded by sharing that we continue to present to schools the benefits of having a Washington state multistate license.

- **HELMS Update** – Ms. Zawislak-Bielaski provided an update on the HELMS project and the implementation of HELMS LITE. She explained that this was basically the release of the application side of HELMS. It replaced the online application portal. Unfortunately, we did have our share of issues with the system as we would have with any new system release. She explained that we are working our way through the bugs. Ms. Zawislak-Bielaski shared that she participates in daily HELMS hyper-care meetings with a group from other areas where they discuss the issues reported and share the information with the IT team working with HELMS. Mr. Hoehn added that we are in a phase of the project that is intensely focused on the credentialing. He further shared that Ms. Zawislak-Bielaski, and her crew deserve a huge congratulations because the hyper-care period was originally supposed to only last two weeks, but we had lots of issues rise that affected our licensing unit. He also shared that the HELMS team is trying to determine factors about the proposed release in December of this year and maybe having to push the date back to February. The HELMS team is hoping to have all the licensing completed by December of this year, and then the entire system in working order by Fall of 2025. Board member Morrell asked Mr. Hoehn if he would provide some background to what the HELMS project is. Mr. Hoehn explained the purpose and background of HELMS.

IV. New Business

- **Governor's Weekly Report** – Ms. Underwood provided an update on the Governor's report. She shared that we were at an eight day turn around for processing applications. We can attribute some of this to the HELMS Lite issues we experienced. She shared examples of a few issues. Applicants were submitting their online application, and the application simply did not come through to us; it appeared in our system as a blank document. We had to reach out to IT and request they recreate the document. We were seeing files stuck at our intake desk. We received a lot of calls from frustrated applicants. Our customer service team worked as the middleman as we tried to assist both the applicants and provide details to our IT team on what the issues were so they could resolve it and allow applicants to successfully submit their application. We have been working on getting that number back down below seven days. She added that hopefully as HELMS issues get resolved, we will have less files sitting, and we'll be able to move files through the licensing process quickly.
- **SSHB 1724 - RCW 18.130.077 Licensure Requirements Waiver for Out-of-State and Nationally Certified Applicants** – Mr. Hoehn provided background on substitute House Bill 1724. In the 2023 legislative session, this House bill was related to behavioral health providers. We analyzed it and determined that it really had no effects on nursing. It dropped off our radar in the 2023 session. He added that very late in the legislative process, the legislature added a section that affected the Uniformed Disciplinary Act, which of course all healthcare professions, boards, and commissions are bound by. He continued to explain that they added a new section in the UDA, 077. This basically gives a shell in #1. It explains that we shall waive education, training, experience and exam requirements for applicants who have been credentialed in another state or states with substantially equivalent standards for two years preceding their application. Mr. Hoehn explained that this was in efforts to try and get the healthcare workforce into place. However, we already have the compact that allows nurses from forty-two states to come in and practice in Washington state. This became law as of mid-2023 and we became aware that other boards and commissions in the Department of Health were trying to come up with examples for this shell, waiving all these things. The question that really comes before the Board is which are those states with substantially equivalent standards. This is not defined in the new law; but we do have an interpretation based on legal advice that the words waive education, training and experience, and exam requirements means that for these equivalent states, we would not even be able to ask applicants to supply evidence or confirm such things as transcripts or exam scores. And this is a law that was intended to streamline the licensing process.

Mr. Hoehn continued to explain to the committee the question that comes before the Board are two decisions. Would the Board believe it is in the interest of the public to waive education, training experience or exam requirements for applicants who have achieved a national certification for their profession? This seems that it would only apply in our case to ARNPs, but we already have a maintenance certification requirement in our licensing laws for ARNPs. This really goes to sub section two of 077, and that really is discretionary. Mr. Hoehn added that the questions needing to be addressed is if the Board will adopt to waive these requirements for nationally certified nurses? Secondly, which other states, if any, are substantially equivalent? These will need to be voted on at the July business meeting. Mr. Hoehn asked Ms. Bayne if she had

anything to add. Ms. Bayne only replied that this decision will need to be taken to the full Board. She further explained that although it was explained in a one-page document, it was a little bit confusing because the first question is referencing subsection two and the second question is referencing subsection one. She agreed with Mr. Hoehn and added that the licensing subcommittee would need to make a recommendation to the full Board. Board member Garcia asked for clarification regarding national certification and the professions it was relevant to as he is nationally certified through Critical Care Associations. Based on the language, would this apply to RNs and ARNP credentials? Mr. Hoehn explained that this was a good point; however, in this case, it would apply to ARNP credentials as it is tied to licensure because we have maintenance of certification as a requirement in this state, all the other extremely important certifications that are attained are not requirements for licensing. Board member Morrell expressed her concern regarding this amendment as the Board takes very seriously that the people of Washington are protected. She continued to add that the Board did add extra rules when it came to the Florida school issues reserving the right to request and review supporting documents when we suspect things are not kosher. Board member Garcia inquired if the Operation Nightingale was publicized before or after this amendment was added. He believed that this would be important contextual information. Ms. Bayne replied that Operation Nightengale was indeed publicized fore the passage of this statute. Board member Morrell added that she would like to keep this Board's ability to request and review transcripts during the licensing process if necessary. She asked the committee for their thoughts on this. Board member Garcia replied that he was in alignment with Board member Morrell. He continued to add that it was not in the best interest of the public health to waive these requirements, just as we saw what could possibly happen with Operation Nightengale. Board member Myrick also agreed with Board members, Garcia and Morrell. Board member Morrell asked if there needed to be a motion. Mr. Hoehn shared that if there's a consensus among the board members on the call, they could take this plan forward and make a recommendation to the full Board at the July business meeting.

V. Ending Items

- **Public Comment** - None
- **Review of Actions**
- **Meeting Evaluation** - All
- **Date of Next Meeting** - August 20, 2024
- **Adjournment** 1:55 PM

