



PENNSYLVANIA'S OCCUPATIONAL LICENSURE REFORM

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OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING IN PENNSYLVANIA

- Licensing is overseen by the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs (BPOA) within the Department of State
- 29 different professional boards and commissions regulate 255 licensure types within BPOA
 - Comprised of members of licensed community and public members appointed by governor and confirmed by Senate
 - Governed by enabling statutes and regulations, and hold regular public meetings
 - Over 1 million individuals are licensed through BPOA
- Independent Regulatory Review Committee (IRRC)
 - Independent commission that must approve all regulations
 - 2-year regulatory process



OVERVIEW OF REFORM



- October 24, 2017, Governor Tom Wolf signed an Executive Order directing BPOA to review the commonwealth's professional licensure process
- June 11, 2018, BPOA submits a final report to the Governor
 - Outlines multiple avenues for reform to make the process less burdensome for licensees
 - Eliminating 13 license types
 - Licensure portability for military spouses
 - Amending continuing education requirements
 - Repealing the automatic 10-year ban on licensing anyone convicted of a drug felony
- July 1, 2019, Governor Wolf signed Act 41 of 2019 into law
 - Requires each board to establish a process for licensure by endorsement for out-of-state licensees
- August 2019, IRRC approved regulations allowing for certain expungements disciplinary actions from records

CONTINUED REFORM EFFORTS



- The Department of State will continue working with Saint Francis University (SFU) on 2 grants
 - Grant 1: SFU will publish a 50-state comparison of licensure requirements and fees in October, benchmarking Pennsylvania's requirements against the nation.
 - SFU will also complete a survey to PA veterans to understand the barriers they face to receiving occupational licenses
 - Grant 2: Veterans Accelerated Learning for Licensed Occupations Project – Streamlining the process for veterans to transfer military occupations into professional licenses
- Sunrise Evaluations to determine necessity of new licensure types
- Ongoing collaboration with Legislature to pursue legislative changes in the fall
 - Example: Good Moral Character
- Increased stakeholder outreach through the appointment of a Director of Intergovernmental Affairs
- Continued improvements to the online licensure portal system - PALS

ADVANTAGES TO REFORM IN PENNSYLVANIA

- Governor and Legislature both are focused and engaged on making common-sense reforms to system
 - Example: Act 41 streamlines the process for licensure for new residents, while ensuring the public health
 - Continued conversation on how to improve the system legislatively and administratively
- Ability to utilize regulations to make changes in a more efficient manner, and allow direct input from the public and legislature throughout the process
- Continued momentum nationwide on easing the licensure process
- Increased stakeholder outreach allows for the Department to learn of new ways to improve the current system, and discuss legislative changes to pursue together

BARRIERS TO REFORM

- Boards and Commissions
 - Pushback on proposed regulatory changes
 - Example: Continuing education reform
 - Differences on interpreting statutes can lead to misaligned application of requirements
 - Example: Criminal history records and good moral character
- Legislative
 - Some early bipartisan reforms are now receiving pushback
 - Having to monitor legislation to ensure that new licensure categories are not created, or more stringent requirements are placed on the board
 - Lack of funding provided to the Department of State for implementing legislative changes

INSTITUTIONALIZATION

- Regulatory System – Allows for policy changes to be made without legislation to each individual board
- Office of Intergovernmental Affairs – Housed within the Department of State. Primarily focused on stakeholder outreach and works directly with licensed communities on issues they face, and how to constantly improve systems
- BPOA – Headed by a Commissioner that is housed within Department of State. Office's sole responsibility is to oversee the 29 boards and related activities
- Online licensing process – Front facing application and renewal process, requires continual improvement for usability
- Legislators – Many state legislators are professionally licensed, and therefore reform efforts remain salient
- Customer Service – Issues raised during the licensure process maintains focus on system improvements