



The Office of Secretary of State

Brad Raffensperger
SECRETARY OF STATE

Speaker Jon Burns
332 State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Lt. Governor Burt Jones
240 State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

May 14, 2024

Gentlemen,

Thank you for your letter dated May 13, 2024. I appreciate that your offices have agreed to start working with me to tackle the issues facing professional licensing in the State of Georgia. The additional \$1,490,019 in the FY 25 budget will go a long way towards getting this historically underfunded division to serviceable levels, and we appreciate the \$145,600 that will help tide us over until the FY 25 budget begins on July 1 of this year. The reality is that small business owners are expecting the level of service that they are paying for, yet the majority of their fees are being redirected to the general fund. The professional licensing division brings in between \$25 million - \$30 million a year, and FY 25 is the first time that the division will receive an operating budget over \$10 million. As Secretary of State, I believe that 100% of fees should go toward servicing the applicant, instead, the majority of the fees go toward the general fund. It's time for the funds to follow the applicant.

As you may know, I led the GA WORKS Licensing Commission last year, under the mission to "meet the needs of a growing state by reducing bureaucratic barriers to employment." This year-long project was a collaboration between several legislators, chambers of commerce, and licensing board members. We heard public input from the Georgia Justice Project, the Georgia Nursing Leaders Coalition, the Licensed Professional Counselors Association, Propelus, the BIG Partnership, the Georgia Association of Landscape Architects, and members of the public. Over the course of our meetings across the state, we developed several principles to guide the modernization of professional licensing in Georgia. I'm happy to report that several of these principles and recommendations were utilized during the 2024 legislative session in bills such as HB 880, which provides expedited licensure for military spouses; SB 195, which provides for a social work licensure compact; SB 354, which allows for people to work in salons as blow-dry stylists before they achieve their cosmetology license; and SB 449, which allows for veterans to use their military experience towards licensure as a certified nursing aide. These bills will allow for people to get to work quicker and with less obstacles, something that every Georgian can agree on.

I was disappointed to see that two of the strongest pieces of licensure-friendly legislation did not make it through by Sine Die. HB 1096 would have allowed for the professional licensing division to move to a completely modern mode of tracking continuing education, and freed up my staff to focus on processing new applications, instead of hand-auditing continuing education. HB 1190 would have allowed for our division director to administratively issue non-controversial licenses instead of requiring applicants to

wait for their application to be heard by a licensing board, some of which meet only every few months. These are just two examples of problems that I have been working to resolve during my tenure as Secretary of State, and I look forward to you getting the legislature actively engaged in these issues.

Again, I want to thank you for your commitment to improving licensure in the State of Georgia. I look forward to working with the members of your blue ribbon committee to get solutions in place.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or my staff throughout this process.

Thank you,



Brad Raffensperger
Secretary of State

CC:

Chairman Hatchett
Leader Efration
Chairman Wiedower
Chairman Prince
Chairman Tillery
Leader Gooch
Chairman Walker
Senator Mallow