



Joint Finance Testimony – Secretary Dave Ross

Honored co-chairs Darling and Nygren, distinguished members of the committee -- Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I am Dave Ross, Secretary of the Department of Safety and Professional Services.

Four years ago, I came before this same committee to discuss Governor Walker's 2011-2012 proposed budget. Through that budget, the Legislature voted to merge the Department of Regulation and Licensing with sections of the Department of Commerce to create one cohesive, efficient agency - the Department of Safety and Professional Services.

I led that effort and I sit here four years later to proudly tell you that merger has been a profound success.

By merging Regulation and Licensing with large sections of Commerce we were able to combine like functions, such as license registration and oversight, to save taxpayer resources and provide a single point of contact for the public. Today, DPS is responsible for credentialing and ensuring the safe and competent practice of 231 professions, encompassing more than 440,000 individuals.

DSPS houses many public safety programs such as commercial building plan review, inspection of public-use machinery including elevators and ski lifts, and residential and commercial building code enforcement. We take our commitment to public safety very seriously, and have worked diligently to preserve the integrity of these programs while reducing over-burdensome regulations and high operations costs.

We also manage the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, or PDMP. The PDMP is an online database of all Schedule 2-5 drugs dispensed in Wisconsin and is an excellent tool to combat prescription drug abuse in Wisconsin. Since its inception in 2013, the PDMP has shown a decrease in doctor shopping of 25% on average every month.

Under Governor Walker's direction, the Department of Safety and Professional Services has put an emphasis on modernizing our services to make government more efficient, more effective, and more accountable.

The Online Licensure Application System gives our customers the option to apply and pay for applications online. A sample of 10% of Nursing applicants demonstrated a 90% improvement in application processing time using the online licensure process.

Our License Look-Up feature is a consumer tool that allows the public to look up a credential online and verify that their builder, dentist, or accountant holds a valid license in good standing.



With Electronic Plan Review, architects and designers may submit building and component plans electronically for review. In the last year alone, nearly 2,000 plans were submitted through the Electronic Plan Review system.

The Department received over 1,000 more plans for review in 2014 than 2013, confirming that industry and jobs are increasing in Wisconsin. Electronic plan review makes this submission process easier so economic projects can be approved and begin construction quickly.

These improvements have been more impactful because of the successful creation of DSPS. The merger gave us the ability to affect more customers in a positive manner by housing them all in a single agency.

As you know, Governor Walker's proposed 2015-2016 budget includes a provision to combine the Department of Safety and Professional Services with the Department of Financial Institutions to create the Department of Financial Institutions and Professional Standards. In addition, several other entities would also be added to the Department, including the Office of Business Development and the Small Business Regulatory Review Board.

Housing all of these functions in one agency will give us the ability to dramatically increase government efficiency and provide a better value to the taxpayers by aggregating similar functions into a one-stop shop for citizens and businesses.

DSPS saved millions of dollars through merging agencies four years ago by implementing common sense initiatives such as reformatting office space, decreasing redundant management functions, and managing our finances on a forward-looking basis.

I expect the same result from this merger.

Both the Department of Safety and Professional Services and the Department of Financial Institutions have shown that housing similar duties in one agency can improve efficiency and customer service. If this budget provision is approved we will approach this challenge thoughtfully and diligently to continue to improve upon our successes and provide a better service to the customer, as well as a better value to the taxpayer.

Before entering public service, I was a small business owner. I understand the need to make government operate more efficiently for our customers because I've been on the other side of it. This proposal will continue growing the state's economy, but not the size of its government.

I support this merger wholeheartedly and look forward to working with the Legislature, Governor Walker, and the exceptional people at DFI to bring our two agencies together.

Thank you. Secretary Allen and I are at your disposal to answer any questions you have.