

April 1, 2022

Acting Attorney General Platkin and Acting Director Neafsey

NJ Office of the Attorney General

Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex

25 Market St, Trenton, NJ 08611

Re: Solutions to the Challenges Facing Licensees at the NJ Division of Consumer Affairs

Dear Acting Attorney General Matthew Platkin and Acting Director Sean Neafsey,

As leaders of our state's trade associations and licensed profession associations, we write to you regarding the many challenges facing professionals across industries licensed and regulated by the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs. Operating procedures within the Division have long been a challenge for the business community, but the pandemic has laid bare and exacerbated many of the broken systems within the Division that should be resolved in order to mitigate hindrances to business and professional growth in our state. Below are our collective priority suggestions on how the Division can be improved to better meet the needs of licensed professionals and consumers in New Jersey. Due to the urgency of this matter, we respectfully request a meeting to further discuss how our industries can work together with the Office of the Attorney General to enhance the capabilities of the Division.

For decades, revenue generated by the Division from licensing fees has been diverted from the Division to other agencies and departments across state government. This diversion of funds has left the Division under-resourced despite its standing as a large revenue generator in the state. We urge the state to stop diverting licensing fee revenue into the general fund and utilize these monies for their true purpose of supporting licensing boards, Division operating procedures, and customer service for licensees. This will greatly help the Division to properly serve the thousands of licensees regulated by the dozens of licensing boards in Consumer Affairs.

Like other state departments and agencies, the Division of Consumer Affairs is in desperate need of technology and infrastructure upgrades. Modernizing the many antiquated IT systems that have long been broken within the Division will allow for greater capacity and efficiency for licensed professionals and state employees. Technology upgrades will allow for more streamlined digital processes that can make applications more user-friendly for businesses and licensed professionals.

Additionally, we urge the Division to maintain an adequate number of well-trained support staff for all licensing boards. Professional staff that works in coordination with licensing boards, the Division, and the public should be well versed in the needs and job functions of the professionals they regulate. The for-profit and not-for-profit business community relies heavily on these government employees for timely information and assistance. We encourage the Office of the Attorney General to provide customer service training and profession-specific subject matter training to division employees to ensure they have the tools needed to address public inquiries in a timely, effective and respectful manner.

Lastly, we urge the Division to encourage all licensing board vacancies to be filled in a timely manner.

These suggestions will help address the long backlogs of licensure applications currently before the many boards overseen by the Division. Delays and inefficiencies for licensures in our state not only harm aspiring professionals and the business community, but also consumers across the state that are in desperate need of professional services. Without a fully functioning Division of Consumer Affairs, New Jersey cannot support critical professions ranging from social work to engineering and nursing to accounting, among many others. We urge you to act now to make long-overdue improvements to the Division of Consumer Affairs and better serve the professionals and consumers of our state.

Thank you for taking our concerns and suggestions into consideration. We look forward to hearing back from you and working together on addressing these critical matters with the Office of the Attorney General to enhance the capabilities of the Division. If you have any questions, please contact Chrissy Buteas, NJBIA Chief Government Affairs Officer, at cbuteas@njbja.org.

Sincerely,

Cathy Chin, Executive Director, Alliance for Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities

Joseph A. Fiordaliso, President, American Council of Engineering Companies of New Jersey

John Cwikla, AIA, President, American Institute of Architects/ NJ Chapter

Daniel Kim, Executive Director, American Physical Therapy Association of New Jersey

Charles Latini, PP, AICP, American Planning Association- NJ Chapter

Anthony Parziale, RLA, President, American Society of Landscape Architects/ NJ Chapter

Amy Boright Porchetta, CAE, CFRE, Executive Director, Association of New Jersey Chiropractors (ANJC)

Jessica Springstead, President, Athletic Trainers' Society of New Jersey

Jennifer Mancuso, Executive Director, Fair Share Hospitals Collaborative

Brian Oliviera, Pharm.D., Executive Director, Garden State Pharmacy Owners, Inc.

Andy Aronson, President & CEO, Health Care Association of New Jersey

Nancy Fitterer, President & CEO, Home Care and Hospice Association of New Jersey

Adam Blecker, New Jersey State Chapter Leader, Home Care Association of America

Anthony Reznik, Director of Government Affairs, Independent Pharmacy Alliance

James W. McCracken, President & CEO, LeadingAge NJ & DE

Larry Downs, CEO, Medical Society of New Jersey

Eileen Kean, State Director, National Federation of Independent Business

Jaime Wherry, L.Ac., President, New Jersey Acupuncture Society

Jaime L. Gilmore, LMFT, President, New Jersey Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

Debra L. Wentz, Ph.D., President and CEO, New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc.

Tajma Kotoric, Chief Executive Officer, New Jersey Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons

Jennifer Thompson, MSW, Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers – NJ Chapter

Chrissy Buteas, Chief Government Affairs Officer, New Jersey Business and Industry Association (NJBIA)

Judy Welshons, New Jersey Cemetery Association

Dr. Maria del Carmen Rodriguez, President, New Jersey Counseling Association

Jim Schulz, Director of Governmental and Public Affairs, New Jersey Dental Association

Elise Barry, CEO, New Jersey Pharmacists Association

Lorraine Fenenic, Acting Executive Director, New Jersey Podiatric Medical Society

Ralph Thomas, CEO & Executive Director, New Jersey Society of Certified Public Accountants (NJCPA)

Matthew Halpin, Executive Director, New Jersey Society of Municipal Engineers

Keira Boertzel-Smith, JD, Executive Director, New Jersey Society of Optometric Physicians

Fernando Echeverria BS, RRT, President, New Jersey Society for Respiratory Care

William P. Delisky, PE, President, New Jersey Society of Professional Engineers

George R. Kelder, CEO/Executive Director, New Jersey State Funeral Directors Association

Judith Schmidt, CEO, New Jersey State Nurses Association

Phillip E. Russo, CAE, Executive Director, New Jersey Veterinary Medical Association (NJVMA)

Anthony Reznik, Director of Government Affairs, Omega Pharmacy Group

Danielle Vigilotti, President, Opticians Association of New Jersey

cc.

George Helmy, Chief of Staff, Governor Phil Murphy

Parimal Garg, Chief Counsel, Governor Phil Murphy