

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE OF THE NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE

Report as required by Neb. Rev. Stat. 84-948

Committee Members

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Occupational Board Reform Act

The Legislature passed the Occupational Board Reform Act in 2018 (Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 84-901 to 84-920) with an operative date of July 1, 2019. The act requires that:

“Beginning in 2019, each standing committee of the Legislature shall annually review and analyze approximately twenty percent of the occupational regulations within the jurisdiction of the committee and prepare and submit an annual report electronically to the Clerk of the Legislature by December 15 of each year as provided in this section. Each committee shall complete this process for all occupational regulations within its jurisdiction within five years and every five years thereafter. Each report shall include the committee's recommendations regarding whether the occupational regulations should be terminated, continued, or modified.” (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 84-948)

Committee Findings

Neb. Rev. Stat. 84-948 requires the report to include the following with answers in bold:

(3) A committee's report shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

(a) The title of the regulated occupation and the name of the occupational board responsible for enforcement of the occupational regulations.

The Board of Registered Environmental Health Specialists regulates the occupations of Registered Environmental Health Specialists, Provisional Environmental Health Specialists and Temporary Registered Environmental Health Specialists.

(b) The statutory citation or other authorization for the creation of the occupational regulations and occupational board;

Neb. Rev. Stat. 38-1307 and 38-1315

(c) The number of members of the occupational board and how the members are appointed;

6 members appointed by the NE State Board of Health

(d) The qualifications for membership on the occupational board;

One public member, other members shall have been engaged in environmental health for at least 10 years, responsible charge of work for at least five years at the time of appointment and shall be a registered environmental health specialist.

(e) The number of times the occupational board is required to meet during the year and the number of times it actually met;

• **Required FY 2024-2023:**

1

• **Held FY 2024-2023:**

2

• **Required FY 2023-2022:**

1

• **Held FY 2023-2022:**

2

• **Required FY 2022-2021:**

1

• **Held FY 2022-2021:**

1

• **Required FY 2021-2020:**

1

• **Held FY 2021-2020:**

1

• **Required FY 2020-2019:**

1

• **Held FY 2020-2019:**

2

(f) Annual budget information for the occupational board for the five most recently completed fiscal years;

Cash licensure fees are deposited in the Professional and Occupational Credentialing Cash Fund. There is not a Board-specific budget; however, the Cash Fund allows for payment of all the applicable Boards' expenses, as well as the DHHS Licensure Unit's related expenses, to be paid out of the Fund. Spending authority for the Fund is established each biennium in the budget bill.

(g) For the immediately preceding five calendar years, or for the period of time less than five years for which the information is practically available, the number of government certifications, occupational licenses, and registrations the occupational board has issued, revoke, denied, or assessed penalties against, listed anonymously and separately per type of credential, and the reasons for such revocations, denials, other penalties.

Government Certificates Issued:

Registered Environmental Health Specialist: 22

Provisional Environmental Health Specialist: 34

Temporary Registered Environmental Health Specialist: 30

Denials:

Provisional Environmental Health Specialist: 6 (application file was closed for not completing application within set timeframe; application withdrawn by applicant)

No Denials for Registered Environmental Health Specialist or Temporary Registered Environmental Health Specialist

Revocations:

None

Penalties Against:

None

(h) A review of the basic assumptions underlying the creation of the occupational regulations;

Statutory authority for these occupational regulations is found in Neb. Rev. Stat. 38-1301 through 38-1315

(i) A statement from the occupational board on the effectiveness of the occupational regulations

“The current level of regulation/manner of operation of the Registered Environmental Health Specialist Credential overseen by the State Board of Registered Environmental Health Specialists has been, and would continue to be, highly effective in ensuring that Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS) professionals practicing in the State of Nebraska provide quality, ethical service to all we serve. 2 “Registered Environmental

Health Specialists work on the front lines of Environmental Public Health throughout the State of Nebraska. REHS professionals work at State and local health departments, hospitals and emergency management agencies, as well as in multiple roles in the private sector.

“We use our education and experience daily in making decisions, providing education, and enforcing regulations which protect human health and the natural environment upon which human life depends. Failure to ensure that Environmental Health Specialists making these decisions seek the continuing education necessary to practice competently in an increasingly fluid natural world (i.e., the emergence of COVID-19) would increase the risk of adverse health outcomes for the people of Nebraska significantly.

“The oversight provided by the board related to disciplinary actions against credential holders (when necessary) also ensures that ethical and professional standards of practice are maintained by all REHS professionals serving the people of Nebraska.”

(j) A comparison of whether and how other states regulate the occupation;

Other states also regulate the Environmental Health Specialist profession. Many states offer credentialing through the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA).

<https://www.neha.org/>

(4) Subject to subsection)5) of this section, each committee shall also analyze, and include in its report, whether the occupational regulations meet the policies stated in section 84-946 considering the following recommended courses of action for meeting such policies:

The regulations (Title 172, Chapter 168) appear consistent with the statutes.

- (a) If the need is to protect consumers against fraud, the likely recommendation will be to strengthen powers under the Uniform Deceptive Trade Practices Act or require disclosures that will reduce misleading attributes of the specific goods or services:

N/A

- (b) If the need is to protect consumers unclean facilities or to promote general health and safety, the likely recommendation will be to require periodic inspections of such facilities;

N/A

- (c) If the need is protect consumers against potential damages from failure by providers to complete a contract fully or up to standards, the likely recommendation will be to require that providers be bonded:

N/A

- (d) If the need is to protect a person who is not party to a contract between the provider and consumer, the likely recommendation will be to require that the provider have insurance;

N/A

- (e) If the need is to protect consumers against potential damages by transient providers, the likely recommendation will be to require that providers register their businesses with the Secretary of State;

N/A

- (f) If the need is to protect consumers against a shortfall or imbalance of knowledge about the goods or services relative to the providers' knowledge, the likely recommendation will be to enact government certification; and

N/A

- (g) If the need is to address a systematic information shortfall such that a reasonable consumer is unable to distinguish between the quality of providers, there is an absence of institutions that provide adequate guidance to the consumer, and the consumer's inability to distinguish between providers and the lack of adequate guidance allows for undue risk of present, significant, and substantiated harms, the likely recommendation will be to enact an occupational license.

N/A

(5) If a lawful occupation is subject to the Nebraska Regulation of Health Professions Act, the analysis under subsection (4) of this section shall be made using the least restrictive method of regulation as set out in section 71-6222.

N/A

(6) In developing recommendations under this section, the committee shall review any report issued to the Legislature pursuant to the Nebraska Regulation of Health Professions Act, if applicable, and consider any findings or recommendations of such report related to the occupational regulations under review.

N/A

(7) If the committee finds that it is necessary to change occupational regulations, the committee shall recommend the least restrictive regulation consistent with the public interest and the policies in this section and section 84-946.

NA

Conclusion

The licenses, certifications, and registrations overseen by the Board of Registered Environmental Health Specialists are intended to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Nebraskans. The current regulation of the environmental health specialist occupation by licensure is appropriate and balanced and does not need modification at this time.