



TO: Assembly Committee on Health, Aging & Long-Term Care
FROM: Robert Smallins, Jr. MBA, BS, RRT, Director, Respiratory Services, Children's Wisconsin
DATE: Wednesday, October 15, 2025
RE: Support for AB 193 – Ratification of Respiratory Care Interstate Compact

Chair Moses and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share Children's Wisconsin's support for AB 193 today. My name is Robert Smallins, Jr. and I am the Director of Respiratory Care Services at Children's Wisconsin.

As many of you know, Children's Wisconsin is the state's only independent health care system dedicated solely to the health and well-being of kids. We offer a wide array of programs and services inside the walls of our hospitals and clinics and out in the communities we serve. Children's Wisconsin's has over 100 respiratory therapists who collaborate with a multitude of other specialists to help ensure our pediatric patients receive the specialized care they need. This includes the tiniest, premature infants whose lungs are not fully developed, caring for children with asthma, and managing devices and equipment to help patients who can't breathe well on their own.

Earlier this year, Children's Wisconsin faced a 20% vacancy rate among respiratory therapist positions. Despite the important role respiratory therapists play in patient care, Children's Wisconsin is not alone amongst hospitals and health systems that face challenges in filling vacant positions. A recent survey of respiratory leaders by the American Association for Respiratory Care showed that 87% believe there is a current, local shortage of respiratory therapists and 84% think a shortage in the future is likely. Reflecting trends in other health care careers, many respiratory therapists are retiring and fewer are entering the workforce.

To help address these challenges and help fill these traditionally hard-to-fill positions, Children's Wisconsin developed a respiratory therapist internship program. Students enrolled in a respiratory therapy education program can apply to gain professional experience in a paid position at Children's Wisconsin while they're in school. Interns help prepare respiratory equipment and supplies, perform support functions, administer medications and provide respiratory care in the hospital under the supervision of a respiratory care practitioner. In addition to obtaining valuable experience working alongside pediatric experts, tuition assistance funds are available for students to help support their continued education.

While health care providers, like Children's Wisconsin, are trying to do their part to support this important workforce, AB 193 represents an important step forward in how the state can support respiratory therapists. The interstate licensure compact will help support professional opportunities and enhance mobility for respiratory therapists across state lines. Because of the demand for respiratory therapists, Children's Wisconsin has relied on travel respiratory therapists to help address our staffing challenges. Enabling licensed respiratory therapists to more easily transition between states will assist with recruitment efforts, reduce licensure delays and administrative burden, and streamline patient care access.

Respiratory therapists play a vital role in our health care systems. AB 193 would position Wisconsin favorably among respiratory care professionals and support this important aspect of our health care workforce. Thank you for the opportunity to share Children's Wisconsin's support for this legislation. I am happy to answer any questions.

Robert Smallins, Jr.
Director, Respiratory Services
Children's Wisconsin