

Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners
Respiratory Care Advisory Committee
Virtual Meeting
March 13, 2023

RCAC Members Present: Ugochukwu Ezema (Ugo)
Sheila Guidry
Elizabeth Hamilton
Diana Merendino
Michael Nolan
Raymond Pisani
Brett Stafford

LSBME attendees. Vincent Culotta, Executive Director
Jacinta Duthu, Executive Staff Officer
Phyllis Johnson, Allied Health Licensing Analyst Supervisor
Priscilla Bartholomew, Respiratory Therapy Licensing Analyst
Patricia Wilton, Executive Council
Michael Francis, Assistant Director of Investigations
Tracy Mauro, IT

Dr. Ugo Ezema, sworn in as physician for the Respiratory Care Advisory Board by Ms. Patricia Wilton.

Meeting Called to order and Live Streaming began at 9:07am 3-13-2023

Introductions of attendees for the newest committee member
Quorum established.

Raymond Pisani called for public comment at this time – no public comment.

Approval of minutes from December 12, 2022 ; Mike Nolan made motion to approve, Elizabeth Hamilton seconded; no discussion; all voting members in attendance approved.

Raymond Pisani solicited public comment – no public comment.

Old Business:

Rules and Regulations Revisions: Raymond Pisani will get with Diana Merendino for dates to be sent out via Doodle Poll for committee to look at rules and regulations. Revision to be coordinated with all members. Mike Nolan inquired if the work session would be in-person or via Zoom. Raymond Pisani stated that would be queried as well. Anticipating task to take no more than 8 hours; Dr. Culotta suggested ZOOM meetings to assist with expenses and to break meetings up into 3 small meetings.

Raymond Pisani solicited public comment – no public comment

Board Opinions Follow Up: Ms. Wilton stated that the letters for board opinion had not gone on the agenda yet. She has drafted two of the three letters and wanted approval in wording from the RCAC before placing on the agenda. The two written letters were viewed by the committee

- Diana Merendino made a motion to accept the letter to be sent to Kathleen Warner. Sheila Guidry seconded, no discussion. All voting members were in favor.
- Sheila Guidry made a motion to accept the letter drafted for Ms. Veret Elizabeth Hamilton seconded; no discussion All voting member were in favor.

Raymond Pisani solicited public comment – no public comment.

Ms. Wilton wanted to discuss the letter that was requested for North Oakes. She was not sure who to address the letter to: the complaintant, department head or hospital. Upon further discussion it was agreed upon that Dr. Culotta would make the call to the hospital to address the possible issue of student RTs being paid being against the practice act after the COVID emergency protocols were dissolved. Dr. Culotta stated if there were further need and the hospital wanted to request a formal ruling, he would present at the meeting in June.

Raymond Pisani solicited public comment – no public comment.

Respiratory Care Advisory Committee appointments: Dr. Ezema is a new physician to our board, the other physician position is still vacant. Ms. Duthu checked with boards and commissions on Friday to see if there were any other appointments. There is the vacancy for the Louisiana Hospital Association and a vacancy for a respiratory therapist (Ms. Hamilton has requested to step down from her position). Ms. Duthu will notify the committee when future appointment letters are sent to her.

Raymond Pisani solicited public comment – no public comment.

Other:

Survey for Licensure Process: Diana Merendino was charged with putting together a survey to assess the issues with the licensure process. Diana Merendino reviewed the content area to be asked and will be putting the content into survey format for the committee members to view and comment on Ms. Wilton stated that this survey would need to be Board approved before it could be sent out. Dr. Culotta gave thanks to Ms. Johnson and Ms. Bartholomew in having the RT active initial applications down to 12.

Raymond Pisani solicited public comment – no public comment.

Compact Licensure Follow-up: Sheila Guidry inquired if there was any information on compact licensure for the RTs in Louisiana Dr. Culotta stated that the process would be a function of the legislature, and to go in this direction, there would be an increase in cost. The rules for the compact would be generated from the group and not necessarily what the Board wanted.

Raymond Pisani solicited public comment – no public comment

New Business:

Preliminary License versus Regular License: Dr. Culotta inquired what was the reasoning behind a preliminary (temporary) license / work permit. Diana Merendino stated that she saw the potential of a hold up in fingerprint process – she knew an individual how had to be printed 4 times before they turned out good enough to run the background check. Diana also stated that in her area of the state hospitals would not hire an individual who had not passed the NBRC board exam for the Entry Level Credential which allowed them the full regular license. Dr. Culotta stated that the LSBME Board did not want to issue any “license” until background checks came in clear and that any early approval to work would need to be through a temporary permit. The RCAC reviewed the current language in the Rules for “temporary license” and “work permit”. Dr. Culotta will draft wording for a policy to work our solution to this issue for the June 12th meeting. Elizabeth Hamilton cautioned the committee not to make policy based on geographical areas of the state, there may be areas that would hire an individual with a work permit prior to passing the NBRC Board Exam. Dr. Culotta inquired if individuals were having issues finding an exam date within a reasonable amount of time. Diana Merendino stated, she was unaware of an issue with testing times/locations, however if an individual failed the exam for the third time, there would be a 120 day wait period before the individual could schedule for the 4th attempt.

Raymond Pisani solicited public comment – no public comment

Licensing Personnel Report – Ms. Johnson said there was no report and again Dr. Culotta and the RCAC gave their appreciation to the licensing individuals for having the current active initial licensing number down to 12

Raymond Pisani solicited public comment – no public comment

Licensing Exam: Dr. Culotta stated Susie Allen needed two volunteers from this committee to work on exam questions for the licensing exam. The exam would be required for all individuals to renew license after their initial year of practice. The exam would be made available to anyone who wished to take the exam as CEU credit for license. Raymond Pisani and Diana Merendino volunteered.

Raymond Pisani solicited public comment – no public comment.

Upcoming Meeting dates:

June 12, 2023

September 18, 2023

December 4, 2023

Raymond Pisani will get out dates for work group after Doodle poll results are in

Elizabeth Hamilton made comment that her daughter whose and RN learned that he LA Board of Nursing is not requiring CEUs for licensure – just a comment.

Diana Merendino made a motion to go into Executive Session, seconded by Brett Stafford; no discussion; all present voted in favor.

Upon return from Executive Session:

Diana Merendino made a motion to deny the request for license in Contact ID# 298486 due to failure to pass the exam within 4 attempts. Brett Stafford seconded.

Raymond Pisani solicited public comment – no public comment.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:20am.

Tentative Meeting Dates for 2023

March 13, 2023

June 12, 2023

September 18, 2023

December 4, 2023

Raymond Pisani asked for public comment: no public comment.

RCAC to research CoARC policy for student employment.

Motion to adjourn by Diana Merendino, seconded by Elizabeth Hamilton.