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INDIANAPOLIS — Nurses who are on probation are forced to stay on suspension longer than expected because of COVID-19, the virus they could help fight if they were working.

Dozens of nurses are waiting for the Indiana State Board of Nursing to reinstate their licenses, but they're not considering license suspensions right now.

Lorie Brown is both a nurse and attorney. She's fighting for nurses who are currently suspended or on probation to return and aid in the fight against the novel coronavirus pandemic.

"There are nurses right now who are ready, willing and able to work," Brown said. "Their suspension time where they're eligible to petition the board to lift it is over. But since the board isn't meeting in person, they are not meeting to determine if these nurses suspensions can be lifted."

RTV6 spoke with one such nurse, who was struggling with an alcohol addiction. Substance abuse is the most common reason for suspension. The nurse prefers we don't identify her.

"I'm coming up on two years sober, I've not had a drink in almost two years," the nurse said. "And so I've put in the work on myself that I need to and now I'm just ready to get back."

Hearings like her have been pushed back because of COVID-19. The nurse said she's a part of a support group and knows of at least 30 other nurses in the same situation.

"I apologize if I get emotional but that's exactly how I feel," the nurse said. "It's my passion to help people and right now I see the need."

Hearing stories of the challenges her fellow nurses are facing right now is painful.

"It's painful because where I validate these nurses emotions, it's one of those things like I would give anything to be struggling with that right now," the nurse said.

The Professional Licensing Agency said the Indiana State Board of Nursing is meeting via video-conferencing but their meeting agendas are limited compared to a routine meeting because of Gov. Eric Holcomb's executive order requesting all public meetings be limited to essential matters for the time being.

RTV6 called into the governor's press conference on Friday but were unable to ask if he would consider amending that executive order to prioritize reinstating eligible nurses.