

More Than a Renewal Fee: How Your License Supports Patient Safety through the Regulation of Respiratory Care

“The Respiratory Care Board’s fees are too high!” Over the years, this has consistently been one of the most common concerns raised by respiratory care practitioners (RCPs) in California, often accompanied by comparisons to nursing fees or licensing fees in other states. Most comments focus specifically on the renewal fee.

The RCB welcomes this feedback. Questions and concerns from licensees help shape future policy decisions and encourage continued evaluation of the Board’s operations, efficiency, and long-term fiscal planning.

Every year, more than 10,000 RCPs renew their California licenses. While renewal fees can understandably feel like a routine administrative requirement, those fees support the infrastructure necessary to regulate the profession, protect consumers, investigate complaints, maintain licensing systems, and ensure respiratory care services are provided safely and competently throughout California.

Consistent with all healthcare licensing boards under the California Department of Consumer Affairs, the Board operates as a special fund agency and receives no General Fund tax dollars. Licensing and renewal fees collected by the Board remain within its special fund and are used exclusively to support the regulation of respiratory care in California.

Understanding Appropriations, Expenditures, and Revenues

When discussing licensing fees, it is important to understand how the Board’s finances operate.

Budget Appropriations are the spending authority approved through the state budget process, allowing the Board to operate during a fiscal year.

Expenditures are the actual operational costs incurred by the Board in administering and enforcing the Respiratory Care Practice Act. These expenditures include staffing, investigations, licensing operations, legal services, technology systems, and statewide administrative support services.

Revenue refers to the money collected by the Board through licensing and renewal fees, application fees, citations and fines, and other authorized sources. These revenues are deposited into the Board’s special fund and are used exclusively for Board operations.

While these terms are often used interchangeably in casual discussion, they each represent different parts of the Board’s overall fiscal structure and are important to understanding how licensing fees support the Board’s mission.

A Longstanding Commitment to Fiscal Responsibility

Concerns regarding fees are not new. In fact, the Board has spent decades working to improve operational efficiency, identify alternative revenue sources, and carefully evaluate fiscal impacts before implementing policy changes.

Historically, the Board has recognized that the size of a profession plays a major role in determining licensing fee levels. Larger licensing boards are able to distribute operational costs across significantly more licensees, resulting in lower per-licensee fees.



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JUNE 2026

This remains one of the primary reasons the RCP renewal fee may appear higher than those paid by registered nurses licensed by the California Board of Registered Nursing. California’s RN workforce is substantially larger than the respiratory care workforce. While the Board must maintain many of the same regulatory responsibilities as larger healthcare boards, including enforcement, investigations, probation monitoring, licensing administration, and public protection, those costs are spread across a much smaller license population.

This dynamic is common among smaller healthcare professions and reflects economies of scale rather than differences in the importance or value of the profession itself.

At the same time, California’s healthcare regulatory environment is among the most comprehensive and resource-intensive in the nation. Costs associated with enforcement, legal services, statewide technology systems, personnel, and shared statewide services are generally higher in California than in many other states.

Despite these challenges, the Board has continued working to minimize financial impact on licensees through operational streamlining, technology improvements, cost recovery efforts, and long-term fiscal planning.

Where the Board’s Revenue Comes From

Biennial renewal fees—currently set at \$330, the statutory maximum—represent the overwhelming majority of the

Board’s revenue and accounts for more than 82% of its annual income.

Additional revenue sources include:

- Initial application fees
- Delinquency fees
- Duplicate license fees
- License endorsements
- Citation and fine revenue
- Enforcement cost recovery collections

The Board has also historically pursued reimbursement strategies to reduce pressure on licensing fees wherever possible.

Between Fiscal Years 2021–22 and 2024–25 the Board’s efforts resulted in:

- More than **\$1.12 million** ordered for recovery.
- Approximately **\$726,476** successfully collected.

These recovered funds are returned directly to the Board’s special fund and help offset enforcement-related expenses.

Where Your Fees Go

As reported in the Board’s 2026 Sunset Review Report, expenditures are allocated across four primary categories as reflected on the chart below:

Expenditures by Program Component (dollars in thousands)									
PROGRAM AREA	FY 2021–22		FY 2022–23		FY 2023–24		FY 2024–25		Average %
	Personnel Services	OE&E	Personnel Services	OE&E	Personnel Services	OE&E	Personnel Services	OE&E	
Enforcement	\$1,101	\$724	\$1,153	\$726	\$1,184	\$912	\$1,196	\$822	53.5%
Licensing/Exam	\$335	\$92	\$433	\$99	\$448	\$106	\$464	\$96	14.2%
Administration	\$437	\$91	\$466	\$95	\$481	\$101	\$650	\$72	16.4%
DCA Pro Rata	—	\$608	—	\$558	—	\$565	—	\$600	15.9%
TOTALS	\$1,873	\$1,515	\$2,052	\$1,478	\$2,113	\$1,684	\$2,310	\$1,590	
Budget Expenditure	\$3,388		\$3,530		\$3,797		\$3,900		

*OE&E – Operating Expenses & Equipment

Together, these functions support the Board’s core mission of protecting consumers and ensuring safe respiratory care practice throughout California.

Enforcement: The Board's Largest Responsibility

Public protection remains the Board's highest priority and is also its single largest operational expense.

Enforcement activities include:

- Investigating complaints and criminal convictions
- Reviewing allegations of unprofessional conduct
- Monitoring probationers and disciplinary compliance
- Issuing citations and fines
- Coordinating with investigators, expert witnesses, and the Office of the Attorney General
- Pursuing disciplinary actions when warranted

These costs reflect the extensive work involved in protecting consumers and appropriately addressing unsafe or unlawful practice. Investigations often involve medical record reviews, legal proceedings, expert consultation, probation monitoring, and ongoing compliance oversight.

The Board has also implemented numerous operational efficiencies over the years to control enforcement-related expenses while maintaining strong public protection standards.

Shared Statewide Services and "Pro Rata"

Like all boards under the California Department of Consumer Affairs, the Respiratory Care Board contributes to statewide operational support costs commonly referred to as "pro rata."

These shared services include:

- Budgeting and accounting support
- Human resources services
- Legal services
- Information technology infrastructure
- Consumer assistance and call center support
- Administrative oversight

Although often less visible to licensees, these services are essential to maintaining operational integrity, transparency, and accountability.

Investing in Technology and Licensing Systems

Modern licensing and enforcement operations depend heavily on accessible and reliable technology systems.

The Board's participation in the BreEZe licensing system supports:

- Online applications and renewals
- Public license verification
- Enforcement tracking and monitoring
- Faster processing times
- Improved transparency and data management

Nearly **all** renewals and initial licensure applications are completed online through BreEZe.

Investments in technology improve operational efficiency while increasing convenience and accessibility for licensees throughout California.

Maintaining Fiscal Stability

The Board continues to prioritize long-term fiscal stability and responsible financial management.

At the close of the 24/25 fiscal year, the Board maintained a reserve of 8.2 months of operating expenses. Maintaining an adequate reserve helps ensure operational continuity during:

- Economic downturns
- Unexpected enforcement surges
- Legislative or regulatory mandates
- Inflationary operational increases
- Technology and infrastructure needs outside the Board's direct control

The Board also continues to evaluate future fiscal pressures, including statewide pro rata increases, personnel costs, and other mandated operational expenditures.

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As part of long-term fiscal planning, the Board is seeking an increase to its statutory fee ceiling to preserve flexibility should future economic or operational conditions require it. However, increasing the statutory fee ceiling does not automatically increase renewal fees. At this time, the Board does not anticipate increasing renewal fees and remains committed to minimizing financial impact on licensees whenever possible.

More Than a Renewal Fee

For many licensees, renewal may simply represent another administrative deadline and expense. But behind every renewal is the infrastructure allowing California's respiratory care profession to function safely, transparently, and effectively.

Every licensing dollar collected by the Board directly supports:

- Licensing qualified practitioners
- Investigating complaints and protecting consumers
- Monitoring probationers and disciplinary compliance
- Maintaining modern licensing technology
- Supporting statewide operational infrastructure
- Preserving public confidence in the profession

California's RCPs provide life-sustaining care to critically-ill and medically-fragile patients every day. Maintaining a strong and effective regulatory framework helps ensure the profession continues to uphold the high standards expected by patients, employers, healthcare systems, and the public.

Ultimately, renewal fees are more than a regulatory requirement—they are an investment in patient safety, professional accountability, and the continued advancement of respiratory care throughout California.

The Board remains committed to transparency, fiscal responsibility, and evaluating ways to improve efficiency while continuing to fulfill its consumer protection mandate. Questions and feedback from licensees are an important part of that process and help inform future discussions surrounding operations, budgeting, and long-term planning.

For those interested in learning more about the Board's financial position, fiscal updates are typically discussed during the Board's final meeting of the calendar year (generally held in the fall), where prior-year revenues, expenditures, reserves, and projected fiscal trends are reviewed in a public setting. Licensees and stakeholders are encouraged to attend or review meeting materials to better understand how Board resources support the regulation of respiratory care in California.

To view a full fiscal update that includes actual and projected revenues and expenditures, please visit the Board's website at www.rcb.ca.gov.

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