
Health Care & Wellness Committee

HB 1874

Brief Description: Regarding the requirements of allopathic physician licensure.

Sponsors: Representatives Tharinger, Cody and Riccelli; by request of Department of Health.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows the Medical Quality Assurance Commission to approve foreign medical schools.
- Requires the Medical Quality Assurance Commission to adopt rules specifying approved residency programs.
- Allows the Medical Quality Assurance Commission to grant full licenses to physicians with exceptional education, training, and practice credentials and to holders of limited teaching-research licenses.
- Allows holders of limited resident licenses to practice outside of the residency under certain circumstances.

Hearing Date: 2/18/15

Staff: Jim Morishima (786-7191).

Background:

Physician Licensure in General.

The Medical Quality Assurance Commission (MQAC) is responsible for the licensure and discipline of physicians. A physician who graduates from a medical school within the United States or Canada must meet a variety of qualifications, including:

- graduation from medical school;
- passage of an examination;
- completion of two years of post-graduate medical training;
- good moral character; and

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- the ability to safely practice medicine.

The two years of post-graduate training (which includes internships, residencies, and fellowships) must be in a program acceptable to the MQAC. The MQAC only approves programs accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, or the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

Foreign Medical School Graduates.

Graduates of foreign medical schools (other than those in Canada) must meet all of the requirements as graduates from domestic schools, including the two years of post-graduate medical training. In addition, foreign medical school graduates must pass the examination given by the Educational Council for Foreign Medical Graduates and be able to read, write, speak, understand, and be understood in English.

A foreign medical school graduate is exempt from the two-year post-graduate medical training requirement if he or she has:

- been admitted as a permanent immigrant to the United States as a person of exceptional ability in the sciences pursuant to the rules of the United States Department of Labor or been issued a permanent immigration visa;
- received multiple sclerosis certified specialist status from the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers; and
- successfully completed at least 24 months of training in multiple sclerosis at an educational institution in the United States with an accredited residency program in neurology or rehabilitation.

Limited Licenses.

The MQAC may issue a limited license without examination to persons who meet certain qualifications. For example:

- An applicant who has completed all licensing requirements except the post-graduate training may be issued a limited license to practice as a resident physician. The license allows the person to practice only in connection with his or her duties as a resident physician and only under the supervision of a licensed physician.
- An applicant who has been nominated by the University of Washington School of Medicine or by the chief executive officer of a health care facility may be issued a limited license if he or she has been invited to serve as a teaching-research member of the institution's instructional staff. The applicant must be licensed or otherwise privileged to practice medicine at his or her location of origin. The applicant may practice medicine only within the confines of the instructional program.
- An applicant who has been nominated by the University of Washington School of Medicine or by the chief executive officer of a health care facility may be issued a limited license if he or she has been selected by the sponsoring institution to be enrolled in one of its designated departmental or divisional fellowship programs. The applicant must have graduated from a recognized medical school and be licensed or otherwise privileged to practice medicine at his or her location of origin. The applicant may practice medicine only within the confines of the fellowship. The limited license may be renewed for no more than two years.

Summary of Bill:

Physician Licensure in General.

The requirement that a post-graduate residency program be two years in length is eliminated. The MQAC must adopt by rule a list of approved medical schools and post-graduate medical training programs as defined by their accrediting bodies.

The requirement that the applicant be able to read, write, speak, understand, and be understood in English is made applicable to all applicants, not just foreign medical school graduates.

Foreign Medical School Graduates.

The MQAC is granted the authority to approve medical schools in other countries. Foreign medical school graduates must complete the certification process with the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (instead of only passing the examination).

The special licensing requirements for multiple sclerosis specialists are eliminated. The MQAC may grant a license to an applicant upon a finding that the applicant's practice in Washington would benefit the public welfare, based on the applicant's exceptional education, training, and practice credentials. Applicants must:

- be considered individually;
- submit an application; and
- undergo a background check.

Limited Licenses.

A holder of a limited resident license may practice outside the scope of the residency if he or she has:

- completed at least two years of post-graduate training;
- received approval from his or her post-graduate training program; and
- filed the approval with the MQAC.

The holder of a teaching-research license is eligible for full licensure if he or she:

- has successfully completed the examination requirements specified in rules adopted by the MQAC;
- is able to read, write, speak, understand, and be understood in English;
- has continuously held a position of associate professor or higher at a recognized Washington medical school for at least three years;
- has no disciplinary actions taken against him or her in the previous five years; and
- has passed the certification process by the Educational Committee for Foreign Medical Graduates, if he or she attend a foreign medical school.

The prohibition against a fellowship license being renewed for more than two years is eliminated.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.