

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5185

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### As Passed House - Amended:

March 3, 2026

**Title:** An act relating to establishing a pilot program that creates a pathway to physician licensure for international medical graduates.

**Brief Description:** Establishing a pilot program that creates a pathway to physician licensure for international medical graduates.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Saldaña, Cortes, Cleveland, Wellman, Stanford, Nguyen, Chapman, Orwall, Dhingra, Valdez, Riccelli, Bateman, Hasegawa and Nobles).

### Brief History:

#### Committee Activity:

Health Care & Wellness: 2/20/26, 2/24/26 [DPA].

#### Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/3/26, 89-4.

### Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by House)

- Establishes the Clinical Experience Graduate Pilot Program (Pilot Program) for medical graduates who hold a Clinical Experience License and meet specified supervised clinical practice requirements.
- Authorizes the Washington Medical Commission to establish a primary care license for applicants for a license to practice medicine who have completed the Pilot Program.
- Eliminates an exemption from postgraduate medical training requirements for applicants for a license to practice medicine who are international medical graduates with specified certification and training in multiple sclerosis.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Bronoske, Chair; Lekanoff, Vice Chair; Rule, Vice Chair; Schmick, Ranking Minority Member; Marshall, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Valdez, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Davis, Engell, Low, Macri, Manjarrez, Obras, Parshley, Shavers, Simmons, Stonier, Stuebe and Thai.

**Staff:** Chris Blake (786-7392).

### **Background:**

Physicians are licensed to practice medicine by the Washington Medical Commission (WMC). An applicant who graduates from a medical school within the United States or Canada must meet specific qualifications, including passage of an examination, completion of two years of postgraduate medical training approved by the WMC, good moral character, and the ability to safely practice medicine.

Applicants who graduate from a medical school located outside of the United States or Canada must meet all of the requirements applicable to graduates from a domestic medical school, other than the requirement to have graduated from a WMC approved medical school. In addition, they must be certified by the Education Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates and be able to read, write, speak, and be understood in English.

An applicant who is an international medical school graduate is exempt from the two-year postgraduate medical training requirement for licensure if the applicant provides proof of:

- admission to the United States as a permanent immigrant who is a person of exceptional ability in sciences according to the federal Department of Labor rules or issuance of a permanent immigration visa;
- receipt of multiple sclerosis certified specialist status from the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers; and
- successful completion of 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.

The WMC may issue a limited license to practice medicine in several circumstances, including to allow an international medical graduate to gain clinical experience. This category of limited license is known as a Limited Physician and Surgeon Clinical Experience License. This limited license applies to persons who have been nominated by a hospital or medical practice or a particular state or local government agency. In addition, the applicant must be certified by the Education Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates, pass steps one and two of the United States Medical Licensing Examination, and complete a background check. A person with this type of limited license may only practice under the supervision of a licensed physician in the same or similar specialty and within the

nominating facility. The license is valid for two years and may be renewed up to three times.

### **Summary of Amended Bill:**

#### Clinical Experience Graduate Pilot Program.

The Washington Medical Commission (WMC) is directed to establish the Clinical Experience Graduate Pilot Program (Pilot Program). The WMC may establish a primary care license for applicants who have successfully completed the Pilot Program.

To be eligible for the Pilot Program, a medical graduate must:

- hold a Clinical Experience License issued on or before July 1, 2026;
- have completed two years of continuous supervised clinical practice under a Clinical Experience License;
- not have any active disciplinary action or significant disciplinary history;
- have obtained satisfactory clinical assessment evaluations from the supervising physician in all categories during the supervised practice;
- have obtained an attestation from the supervising physician; and
- have obtained a written endorsement from the medical director of the practice site.

Participants in the Pilot Program may receive a full, unrestricted medical license to provide primary care if they successfully complete:

- two years of supervised practice under a Clinical Experience License beyond the two years of supervised practice needed to qualify for the Pilot Program;
- requirements of the Clinical Experience License program;
- Step 3 of the United States Medical Licensing Examination; and
- a clinical competency assessment approved by the WMC.

Practice sites that are eligible for the Pilot Program include hospitals, federally qualified health centers, government entities, and private practices or physician employment groups with at least 10 full-time equivalent, board-certified in-person physicians delivering care in Washington.

The WMC must engage with the American Board of Medical Specialties to consider a process for board certification for Pilot Program participants.

Between November 1, 2027, and November 1, 2035, the WMC must provide an annual report on the Pilot Program to the Legislature. The report must include data regarding the practice patterns of Pilot Program participants, information about relevant disciplinary actions against Pilot Program participants, and recommendations for expanding the Pilot Program to include graduates of medical schools in the United States.

The Pilot Program expires June 30, 2035.

Residency Training Exemption for International Medical Graduates with Training in Multiple Sclerosis.

The exemption from the two-year postgraduate medical training requirement for international medical graduates with specified certification and training in multiple sclerosis is removed.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Washington has 50 physicians that are licensed under the Clinical Experience License and this bill allows them to graduate to full licensure. There have not been any patient safety issues in the five years that the Clinical Experience License has been in effect. With this bill, Washington will be the first state to establish a complete process for getting international medical graduates clinical experience, getting them licensed, and getting them practicing in the state. Washington is making real strides toward incorporating international medical graduates into the community and the health care workforce. The substitute bill strikes a balance between making sure that barriers for international medical graduates are being addressed while ensuring appropriate, high-quality, safe patient care.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Mohamed Khalif, The International Medical Graduates Academy (TIMGA); Micah Matthews, Washington Medical Commission (WMC); and Alex Wehinger, WA State Medical Association (WSMA).

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.