

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5185

As of January 28, 2025

Title: An act relating to establishing preceptorship and hardship pathways to medical practice for international medical graduates.

Brief Description: Establishing preceptorship and hardship pathways to medical practice for international medical graduates.

Sponsors: Senators Saldaña, Cortes, Cleveland, Wellman, Stanford, Nguyen, Chapman, Orwall, Dhingra, Valdez, Riccelli, Bateman, Hasegawa and Nobles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/31/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a preceptorship pathway to licensure for International Medical Graduates (IMGs) in lieu of completing a residency.
- Creates a hardship waiver for IMGs who are experiencing difficulty furnishing documents necessary for licensure.
- Deems Canadian medical education and exams equivalent to the United States' for purposes of licensure and removes exceptions to the residency requirement for certain permanent immigrants.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Rohan Bhattacharjee (786-7534)

Background: Physician Licensure Eligibility Requirements for Foreign Graduates. Applicants for licensure as a physician who are graduates of schools of medicine located outside the United States or Canada are required to furnish proof that:

- they have completed a resident course of professional instruction equivalent to that in

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- the United States;
- they meet all the requirements which must be met by graduates of the United States and Canadian schools of medicine except that they need not have graduated from a school of medicine approved by the Washington Medical Commission (WMC);
- they have satisfactorily passed the examination conducted by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates or have met the alternative requirements set forth in commission rules; and
- they have the ability to read, write, speak, understand, and be understood in the English language.

Applicants are exempted from furnishing proof of meeting the postgraduate medical training requirement, which must be met by graduates of United States and Canadian schools of medicine, if they are able to demonstrate that:

- they were admitted as a permanent immigrant to the United States as a person of exceptional ability under the rules of the United States Department of Labor; or
- they have been issued a permanent immigrant visa and 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.

An applicant may obtain an exceptional qualification waiver, waiving requirements determined by WMC in rule, if they possess an acceptable body of work related to research, medical excellence, or employment, and have the recommendation of other national or international experts in the same specialty or field.

WMC may issue limited licenses to international medical graduates (IMGs) upon nomination by the chief medical officer of any hospital, appropriate medical practice, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, the Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Corrections, or a county or city health department. An IMG applying for a limited license must:

- be a state resident for at least one year;
- provide proof of certification by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates;
- pass the United States Medical Licensing Examination; and
- submit to WMC background check as generally required of applicants.

An IMG practicing with a limited license may only practice within the nominating facility or organization, under the control of a licensed supervising physician of the same or substantially similar clinical specialty.

Summary of Bill: Physician Licensure Eligibility Requirements for Foreign Graduates.

The Canadian medical school accreditation and national medical licensure exam is deemed equivalent to the United States medical school accreditation and national medical licensure

examination standards for purposes of licensure. The provisions exempting internationally educated applicants for physician licensure who are permanent immigrants of exceptional ability or hold a permanent immigrant visa and are specialists in multiple sclerosis from furnishing proof of meeting the same postgraduate medical training requirement as graduates of United States and Canadian schools of medicine, are removed.

WMC may waive requirements for internationally trained applicants experiencing hardship in furnishing required documentations for licensure. WMC may elect to require alternate demonstrations of competence in such cases, which may include examinations or specialty assessments, a period of supervised practice, or other appropriate tools for evaluating an applicant. Hardship scenarios may include but are not limited to, refugee status and persecution in the home country of the applicant due to beliefs, ethnicity, or other demographic considerations. WMC may not consider as a hardship the inability of the applicant to complete the certification and examination process or the failure of required examinations.

Preceptorship Pathway to Full Licensure for International Medical Graduates. WMC may create or approve a physician or surgeon preceptorship pathway to full licensure for international medical graduates. Licensure under this pathway does not require completion of the two years postgraduate training program, as required for United States and Canadian medical graduates. An individual licensed and practicing under this pathway would qualify for full and unrestricted physician and surgeon licensure for all purposes, including medical practice, employment role definition, malpractice coverage, credentialing, and insurance billing. Scope of practice limitations may be imposed at the practice level consistent with standard credentialing processes and practice agreements between the licensee and the supervising physician.

The preceptorship licensure pathway consists of:

- holding a limited license;
- full-time practice as a physician in a clinical location or an acceptable alternative location for no less than 48 months; and
- a satisfactory rating in all categories by the supervising physician with a WMC approved clinical assessment evaluation.

Upon completion of these elements, the limited licensee may apply for a full license by providing an attestation from the supervising physician, a written endorsement from the medical director of practice site, proof of board certification, and any other documentation required by WMC.

For exceptionally qualified international medical graduates, WMC may establish an abbreviated assessment program to determine competence and skill level for the purposes of issuing a full and unrestricted license.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.