

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1694

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES,
MARCH 29, 1993

Brief Description: Modifying the examination of health profession candidates for credentialing.

SPONSORS: Representatives Dellwo, Dyer and Morris; by request of Department of Health

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Talmadge, Chairman; Wojahn, Vice Chairman; Deccio, Erwin, Franklin, Fraser, Hargrove, McAuliffe, McDonald, Moyer, Niemi, Prentice, Quigley, Sheldon, L. Smith, and Winsley.

Staff: Scott Plack (786-7409)

Hearing Dates: March 23, 1993; March 29, 1993

BACKGROUND:

The Department of Health and several other state agencies are required to biennially develop the health personnel resource plan (HPRP). The plan identifies health professions personnel shortages in rural and medically underserved areas of the state and proposes activities to alleviate the shortages. The state agencies are required to make recommendations to the Legislature that facilitate the implementation of the plan.

One recommendation in the 1993-95 HPRP urges the health professions boards to use nationally recognized board examinations to facilitate the recruitment of applicants for licensure from other states. The veterinary and optometry boards have questionable authority to approve the use of national examinations. Another recommendation would authorize communities to fund educational slots for students willing to practice as state credentialed health practitioners in those communities.

The state Veterinarian Board of Governors prepares examination questions, conducts examinations, and grades the answers of applicants for licensure as veterinarians. The examination is conducted in English on specified subjects. The statutes allow the board to accept an applicant's results on the National Board of Veterinary Examiners in lieu of the written portions of the state examination.

The Optometry Board prepares lists of examination questions and conducts examinations of applicants for licensure as optometrists. No statutory provision exists to allow the board to substitute the national optometry examination for the state examination.

SUMMARY:

The veterinary board's authority to develop and administer licensure examinations is clarified. The list of specified subjects is repealed, as well as the authority to waive the written portion of the examination. The board will prescribe in rule the content of the examination and may allow the use of a national examination in lieu of a state examination.

The authority of the Optometry Board to prepare and administer licensure examinations is also clarified. This will allow the board to use national examinations in lieu of the state examination.

The Department of Health is authorized to develop a mechanism allowing communities with health care provider shortages to contract with health care education and training programs to train future health care practitioners who will practice in these underserved communities. The programs will train osteopathic physicians or physician's assistants, physicians or physician's assistants, advanced nurse practitioners or nurse midwives, or other practitioners identified in the HPRP as in shortage.

Students must meet all applicable educational program requirements and provide assurances to the community that they will practice there as a condition for receiving community financial assistance. Students serving at least three years in the community are not obligated to repay any educational assistance funds.

The department may provide funds to underserved communities for use in contracting.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE AMENDMENTS:

Provisions are deleted directing the Department of Health to develop a mechanism allowing communities to contract with certain health training programs.

The Secretary of Health, in consultation with the health policy committees of the Legislature, is directed to prepare recommended changes in the statutes to permit the secretary to consider and make changes in the scope of practice and levels of credentialing for the regulated health professions. The secretary is also directed to prepare recommended changes in the statute that will permit the secretary to make modifications in the health professional practice acts to promote administrative efficiency in the operation of the regulatory programs.

The secretary must propose a process to make changes in the scope of practice and levels of credentialing that is similar to the "sunrise" review process used to consider requests to regulate new health professions. A draft policy is also to be prepared to be used in considering requests from private groups to increase the scope of practice or levels of credentialing of a health profession, including identifying who should pay the cost of considering such requests.

The recommendations are to be submitted to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services and the House Committee on Health Care by December 1, 1993.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

Changes in the optometric and veterinarian practice acts will help alleviate shortages of these health professionals.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Jack Melton, Department of Health (pro)