
Health Care & Wellness Committee

SB 6551

Brief Description: Integrating international medical graduates into Washington's health care delivery system.

Sponsors: Senators Stanford, Saldaña, Darneille, Dhingra, Frockt, Hasegawa and Wilson, C.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the International Medical Graduate Implementation Work Group.
- Establishes a clinical readiness assessment and grant funding for international medical graduates.
- Creates an exceptional qualification waiver for international medical graduates.
- Creates a time-limited clinical experience license.

Hearing Date: 2/26/20

Staff: Jim Morishima (786-7191).

Background:

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

International medical graduates must meet all of the requirements applicable to graduates from domestic medical schools. In addition, such 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.

An international medical graduate is exempt from the post-graduate training requirement if he or she has:

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- 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.

Convened in 2019, the International Medical Graduate Work Group (IMGWG) was required to submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature regarding:

- strategies and recommendations for reducing barriers for international medical graduates obtaining residency position in Washington, including pre-residency training;
- recommendations for the appropriate number of residency positions to be designated for international medical graduates and the locations and specialties of those positions; and
- recommendations on the post-residency service requirements for international medical graduates who graduate from a designated residency position.

Recommendations of the IMGWG included:

- an international medical graduate training assistance fund;
- grant-funded career guidance and support services;
- a clinical assessment process for demonstrating residency readiness;
- grants to support international medical graduates needing additional clinical preparation or experience;
- additional license classifications for international medical graduates;
- dedicated residency slots; and
- an international medical graduate implementation group.

Summary of Bill:

I. The International Medical Graduate Implementation Work Group.

The International Medical Graduate Implementation Work Group (Work Group) is established consisting of the following members appointed by the Governor:

- a representative from the Washington Medical Commission (WMC);
- a representative from the Department of Health (DOH), Health Systems Quality Assurance Division;
- a representative from the University of Washington School of Medicine Graduate Medical Education Program;
- a representative from the Washington State University Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine Graduate Medical Education Program;
- a representative from the Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine Graduate Medical Education Program;
- a representative from a statewide association representing physicians;
- a representative from the Washington State Family Medicine Residency Network;
- a representative from a primary care health care employer in a rural or underserved area of Washington;

- a representative from a health carrier offering coverage in a rural or underserved area of Washington;
- a licensed physician with experience working with international medical graduates;
- a representative from an organization specializing in refugee advocacy in Washington;
- a representative from an organization serving refugee physicians and international medical graduates;
- a representative from an organization offering counseling and educational programs to internationally trained health professionals;
- a representative from an organization representing community and migrant health centers; and
- at least two international medical graduates.

The Work Group must propose:

- clinical readiness criteria for international medical graduates;
- a grant award process for distributing funds to entities to provide career guidance and clinical training to international medical graduates; and
- an evaluation process to grant a hardship waiver to international medical graduates who cannot not provide all necessary documentation for licensure due to circumstances out of their control.

The Work Group must submit an annual report to the Legislature from June 30, 2021, to June 30, 2025.

II. Readiness Assessment.

Based on recommendations from the Work Group, the WMC must adopt a clinical assessment to determine the readiness of international medical graduates to apply and serve in residency programs.

III. Grant Funding.

Based on recommendations from the Work Group, the WMC must adopt a grant award process. Subject to appropriated funds and donations from public and private entities, the DOH must award grant funding to:

- approved entities to provide career guidance and support services to international medical graduates, including assistance with the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates certification application and United States Medical Licensing Examination preparation; and
- health care facilities or clinical programs to provide supervised clinical training to international medical graduates.

IV. Licensing.

An applicant for physician licensing who is an international medical graduate may obtain an exceptional qualification waiver, waiving licensing requirements determined by the WMC in rule, if he or she:

- possesses an acceptable body of work related to research, medical excellence, or employment; and

- has the recommendation of other national or international experts in the same specialty or field.

The WMC may issue a time-limited clinical experience license to an applicant who does not otherwise qualify for licensure, but who meets the requirements established by the commission in rule, for the purpose of gaining clinical experience at an approved facility or program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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