

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5226

As of January 31, 2025

Title: An act relating to establishing funding for physician residency positions dedicated to international medical graduates in accordance with the waiver granted by the national residency matching program.

Brief Description: Establishing funding for physician residency positions dedicated to international medical graduates.

Sponsors: Senators Nobles, Stanford, Hasegawa, Slatter, Valdez and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

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

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a grant program for residency programs that train international medical graduates in authorized specialties.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Rohan Bhattacharjee (786-7534)

Background: Physician Licensure Eligibility Requirements for International Medical 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 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 (Commission);
- they have satisfactorily passed the examination conducted by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates or have met the alternative requirements

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- set forth in commission rules; and
- they have the ability to read, write, speak, understand, and be understood in the English language.

International Medical Graduates—Grant Program. In 2020, the Legislature passed SB 6551, which directed the Department of Health (DOH) to award grant funding to approved entities for career guidance, and support services to international medical graduates (IMGs) including, but not limited to, assistance with 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 IMGs. The Commission was directed to adopt appropriate grant award processes for the distribution of funds for this purpose.

National Residency Matching Program—All in Policy. The National Residency Matching Program (NRMP) is a nonprofit organization that facilitates the residency and fellowship placement process for medical school graduates in the United States. The NRMP uses an algorithm to pair applicants with residency programs based on the preferences of both parties.

Under the NRMP All in Policy, any program registering for the Main Residency Match (Match) must register and attempt to fill all positions through the Match or another national matching plan. Programs planning to participate in the Match cannot offer positions outside the Match prior to program director registration and program activation. If a position is offered outside the Match prior to program registration and activation, the program is ineligible to enroll in the Match unless the program has been granted an exception to the All in Policy by the NRMP.

Summary of Bill: Grant Program. A grant program is established to support residency programs that train IMGs. The disbursement of funds for this program must comply with the Commission’s grant award processes and cannot be used for any other purpose.

Authorized Specialties. Authorized specialties that may receive grants include family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, obstetrics and gynecology, and general surgery. These specialty funding options may be expanded at the discretion of the Commission based on available funding, qualified programs, and available residents.

Residency Programs—Funding Requirements. All residency programs receiving funding must fulfill the following requirements:

- at least 75 percent of accepted residency positions must be filled with IMGs. The Commission is permitted to consider exceptions to this standard on a case-by-case basis;
- operate under the waiver granted by the national residency matching program;
- provide and operate the entire residency program with current and good standing accreditation from the accreditation council for graduate medical education;

- result in the residency-trained physician being eligible to be board certified by a board recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties in the specialty trained; and
- provide information to the Commission upon request including, but not limited to, program information, accreditation, resident demographic information, and funding usage.

Washington Medical Commission—Duties. The Commission must establish processes and selection criteria for grant award recipients; create an advisory committee appointed by the executive director of the commission to provide support for establishing selection criteria, award decisions, and consideration of noncompliance issues; establish and enact controls and recovery procedures to ensure funds awarded are used for the contractually agreed-upon purposes; accept grants, gifts, donations, or other funding sources for the sole purpose of funding these residency positions; and disburse additional funds provided through legislative action should additional funding be available.

Advisory Committee—Composition. The advisory committee, appointed by the executive director of the Commission, must include, but are not limited to a member of the Commission; a residency program director or designee whose program does not stand to benefit from the funding under this act; a member of a state ethnic health board; and a member of an organization representing the interests of international medical graduates in Washington State.

Report to the Legislature. Beginning each biennium, from January 1, 2027, to July 1, 2032, the following information must be submitted by the Commission in a report to the Legislature: (1) number of residency positions funded and their location within the state, (2) number of residency physicians completing the residencies and their demographics, and (3) further recommendations for amount of funding or residency specialty expansion from those previously authorized.

Appropriation: The bill contains a null and void clause requiring specific funding be provided in an omnibus appropriation act.

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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Washington has a severe physician shortage, particularly in rural and underserved communities. International medical graduates (IMGs) must apply to hundreds of programs nationwide for limited opportunities. The bill proposes a grant program to fund residency positions specifically for IMGs, prioritizing high-demand specialties. This initiative would increase access to culturally and linguistically competent

care, promoting health equity in underserved areas.

OTHER: The IMG Work Group engaged with all residency programs in Washington, with most expressing interest in participating except three programs in eastern and central Washington citing space limitations.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator T'wina Nobles, Prime Sponsor; Dr. Abdifitah Mohamed, Medical Resident; Mohamed Khalif, The International Medical Graduates Academy; Alex Wehinger, WA State Medical Association (WSMA).

OTHER: Micah Matthews, Washington Medical Commission/Deputy Executive and Legislative Director.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.