

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2002 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 375 (Delegate Taylor)
Environmental Matters

**State Board of Physician Quality Assurance - Examination Requirements -
Exception**

This bill requires the Board of Physician Quality Assurance (BPQA) to grant a limited exception to the required time period within which an applicant for licensure must pass all or part of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE).

This bill takes effect June 1, 2002.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's requirements could be handled with BPQA's existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: BPQA must grant a time period exception to an applicant whose medical education was delayed due to serious illness if the applicant: (1) submits documented evidence of the illness to the board, including proof that the illness caused the delay in medical education; and (2) resumes the applicant's medical education within a reasonable time after the illness has ceased delaying the applicant's medical education. BPQA must adopt regulations implementing the bill's requirements by October 1, 2002. The bill applies retroactively and applies to any applicant who first passed Step 1 or Step 2 of the USMLE on or after January 1, 1992.

Current Law: An applicant for licensure as a physician in Maryland must pass all parts of the United States Medical Licensing Examination. A licensure applicant must pass all three “steps” of the USMLE within a seven-year period beginning with the month and year when the applicant first passes either Step 1 or Step 2.

Background: USMLE is a three-step examination for medical licensure in the United States and is jointly sponsored by the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) and the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME). Results of the USMLE are reported to medical licensing authorities in the United States and its territories for use in granting the initial license to practice medicine. The three steps of the USMLE assess a physician’s ability to apply knowledge, concepts, and principles that are important in health care and that constitute the basis of safe and effective patient care.

The USMLE was implemented between 1992 and 1994 as a successor to the NBME certifying examinations and the Federation Licensing Examination (FLEX). The NBME certifying examinations originally had a seven-year time limit in which an examinee must have passed all parts of the exams. When the USMLE replaced the NBME and FLEX exams, the seven-year time period was no longer mandated by the exam sponsors (NBME and FSMB). Instead, the USMLE Composite Committee recommends a seven-year time limit to state medical boards for the purpose of ensuring that an applicant’s medical knowledge is current at the time of medical licensure. The majority of state medical boards have adopted this recommendation.

Ohio grants a limited exception to their seven-year time limit to applicants whose education was delayed by either personal illness or their participation in certain dual-degree programs.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 42 (Senator Hafer) – Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): National Board of Medical Examiners, Federation of State Medical Boards, USMLE Composite Committee, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Board of Physician Quality Assurance), Department of Legislative Services

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