



Board of Physicians

Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Damean W.E. Freas, D.O., Chair

2021 SESSION POSITION PAPER

BILL NO.: SB 952 – Health Occupations – Internship and Residency Training Requirements – Waiver for Former Service Members Injured in Combat
COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
POSITION: Letter of Opposition

TITLE: Health Occupations – Internship and Residency Training Requirements – Waiver for Former Services Members Injured in Combat

BILL ANALYSIS: Requires health occupations boards to waive internship or residency training requirements for licensure, certification, or registration for a former service member who is disabled as a result of combat deployment.

POSITION & RATIONALE:

The Maryland Board of Physicians (the “Board”) is respectfully submitting this letter of opposition for Senate Bill (SB) 952 – Health Occupations – Internship and Residency Training Requirements – Waiver for Former Service Members Injured in Combat. SB 952 would require the Board to waive residency and internship requirements for service members who were disabled as a result of an injury from combat deployment. While the Board supports efforts to ease the licensure process for service members, internship and residency is an essential component of licensure and cannot be waived without jeopardizing patient safety.

Medical school provides a foundation and framework for the practice of medicine. However, it is the internship and residency training where physicians and other healthcare practitioners fully learn to perform the responsibilities and duties of their profession without supervision. According to a 2006 report by the Federation of State Medical Boards, the uniform requirement that physicians must successfully complete a minimum number of years in residency training in an approved program “further assures state medical boards and the public of the competence of newly licensed physicians.”¹ Removing internship and residency requirements would remove an essential safeguard to the health and wellbeing of Maryland’s citizens.

¹ Report of the Special Committee on the Evaluation of Undergraduate Medical Education. Federation of State Medical Boards, 2006, www.fsmb.org/siteassets/advocacy/policies/evaluation-of-undergraduate-medical-education.pdf. Accessed 17 March 2021.

The Board is not aware of any instances where licensure was denied because a service member was unable to fulfill the residency or internship components of their education due to a disability as a result of injury from combat deployment. The Board is concerned that removing or waiving these requirements would reduce the quality of care and professionalism among physicians and allied health practitioners in Maryland.

In addition to concerns about the removal of key training components for physicians and allied health practitioners, two other elements of the bill need clarification. First, the term “disabled” is not defined in the bill. How would the Board verify whether applicants had been “disabled as a result of injury from combat deployment”? While the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs can provide documentation regarding an applicant’s disability rating, this information does not currently include whether the disability is the result of an injury from combat deployment. Without further clarification, the Board would be unable to effectively enforce this requirement.

Second, as written, SB 952 only waives internship and residency requirements. Many health occupations have clinical training requirements that are not considered internships or residency programs. It is unclear whether SB 952 intends to waive all clinical training requirements for health occupations, or only the requirements for those occupations that specifically require an internship or residency period.

The Board supports efforts to ensure that the licensure process is fair and accessible for all who meet requirements, and would be happy to work with bill sponsors and advocates on finding a non-legislative solution to any access barriers. However, in its current state, the Board must respectfully oppose SB 952.

For more information, please contact Wynee Hawk, Manager, Policy and Legislation, Maryland Board of Physicians, 410-764-3786.

The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Maryland Department of Health or the Administration.