



Board of Physicians

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Harbhajan Ajrawat, M.D., Chair

2025 SESSION POSITION PAPER

BILL NO.: SB 72 - Health Occupations Boards - English Proficiency Requirements and Licensure by Endorsement for Nursing
COMMITTEE: Finance
POSITION: Letter of Support with Amendments

POSITION & RATIONALE:

The Maryland Board of Physicians (the Board) is respectfully submitting this letter of support with amendments for Senate Bill (SB) 72 - Health Occupations Boards - English Proficiency Requirements and Licensure by Endorsement for Nursing. SB 72 would establish that health occupation boards maintain a comprehensive list of other states' English proficiency guidelines that meet the Board's English proficiency requirement on the Board's website.

While the Board supports establishing clear English proficiency guidelines, we believe determining which states have equivalent requirements and maintaining a comprehensive list of other states' English proficiency guidelines on the Board's website would present significant challenges. Furthermore, applicants licensed through reciprocity, endorsement, or the interstate compact are not currently required to demonstrate English language proficiency to the Board.

The Board has experienced difficulty determining the equivalency of other States' requirements with licensure by endorsement. To determine equivalency, when an applicant applies for licensure from any state, the Board must determine the month and year the license was issued and what requirements were in place at that time in the other jurisdiction. For example, determining whether Idaho required English-language proficiency for physicians in 1980 would require the Board to track down the Idaho statute and regulations in effect in 1980 and then compare them to the Board's statutes.

It is important to note that each applicant's initial licensure date differs. The Board would then need to conduct research to determine the applicable requirements at the *time of the applicant's initial licensure*. This presents the challenge of researching other state legislation that was in effect for a certain month and year. Accessing historical or repealed statutes from other states is not only extremely time-consuming and difficult, but unattainable in many instances because the information is not always accessible to the public or available online.

This raises questions regarding the expected timeframe for maintaining the list on the Board's website. Each state has its own legislative session. Given the individualized timing of legislative sessions in other states, and the frequent amendments to other state statutes and regulations, would

an annual update be necessary?

The Board also licenses 14 allied health practitioner types, in addition to physicians. Considering the requirement to maintain a list of English proficiency requirements for each state and each profession, the total number of entries on the Board's website could exceed 700. This estimate does not account for the previously mentioned need to specify each year during which each state's English proficiency requirements were in effect.

Because of the time, research, and detail needed, the Board would need to hire a part-time Health Policy Analyst Associate to research each state's law on the timeframe constraints implemented by this bill and update the Board's website. Therefore, the Board is recommending the amendment on the following page.

The Board is committed to working collaboratively with Senator Lam and other stakeholders to ensure the effective implementation of English proficiency requirements for all healthcare practitioners in Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Oriell Harris, Health Policy Analyst Associate, OriellT.Harris@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Singh Ajrawat".

Harbhajan Ajrawat, M.D.
Chair, Maryland Board of Physicians

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

SB 72 - Suggested Amendments

AMENDMENT TO SENATE BILL 72 (First Reading File Bill)

On page 2 in lines 3-9 strike “IF A HEALTH OCCUPATIONS BOARD REQUIRES EVIDENCE OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AS A CONDITION FOR LICENSURE, CERTIFICATION, OR REGISTRATION, THE HEALTH OCCUPATIONS BOARD MAY NOT REQUIRE AN APPLICANT WHO HOLDS A VALID, UNRESTRICTED LICENSE, CERTIFICATION, OR 6 REGISTRATION FROM ANOTHER STATE THAT REQUIRES EVIDENCE OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY FOR LICENSURE, CERTIFICATION, OR REGISTRATION TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY”.

On page 2 in line 10 strike “EACH” and substitute “A”.

On page 2 in lines 10 - 14 strike “REQUIRES EVIDENCE OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AS A CONDITION FOR LICENSURE, CERTIFICATION, OR REGISTRATION SHALL MAINTAIN ON ITS WEBSITE A LIST OF OTHER STATES THAT HAVE AN ENGLISH PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENT THAT MEETS THE HEALTH OCCUPATION BOARD’S ENGLISH PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENT” and substitute “OFFERS LICENSURE BY ENDORSEMENT, LICENSURE BY RECIPROCITY, OR PARTICIPATES IN A MULTISTATE COMPACT MAY NOT REQUIRE AN APPLICANT FOR LICENSURE THROUGH THESE PATHWAYS TO SUBMIT EVIDENCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AS PART OF THE LICENSURE PROCESS”.