

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1616
By: Bonnen
Public Health
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted a need for the flexibility provided by telemedicine in the delivery of health care, and the growth of telemedicine has increased access to care for patients in underserved and rural areas. A plentiful supply of physicians is needed to meet the demands of a growing population in Texas, and it has been suggested that the ability to practice medicine in multiple states could help meet these demands and help alleviate the physician shortage by providing a new path for physician licensing through an interstate compact. H.B. 1616 seeks to address this issue by establishing the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact to provide a streamlined process that allows physicians to become licensed in multiple states.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 1616 amends the Occupations Code to establish the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact to provide a streamlined process that allows physicians to become licensed in multiple states. The bill sets out the compact's provisions, including provisions relating to the following:

- eligibility requirements for a physician to receive an expedited license under the compact and the method by which a physician who does not meet the eligibility requirements may obtain a license to practice medicine in a member state;
- designation and redesignation of a state of principal license by a physician for purposes of registration for expedited licensure through the compact;
- procedures and requirements for the application for and issuance and renewal of an expedited license through the compact;
- fees for expedited licensure; and
- joint investigations of physicians by member states and disciplinary actions taken by a member board against a physician holding an expedited license under the compact.

H.B. 1616 provides for the creation of the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact Commission to administer the compact and establishes provisions relating to the commission's composition, meeting and voting requirements, general powers and duties, finance powers, organization and operation, and rulemaking functions. The bill requires the interstate commission to establish a database of all physicians who hold or have applied for an expedited license under the compact and sets out reporting and information sharing requirements for member boards relating to physician investigatory or disciplinary matters.

H.B. 1616 provides for the oversight of the compact by the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of state government in each member state and establishes procedures for enforcement of the compact by the interstate commission. The bill sets out provisions relating to procedures for a member state's default in the performance of its obligations or responsibilities under the compact, resolution of disputes between member states, member state eligibility and withdrawal, the compact's effective date, amendments to the compact, and dissolution of the compact. The bill provides for the binding effect of the compact and other laws of a member state.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2021.