

- SUBJECT:** Extending deadlines for passing medical licensing examinations
- COMMITTEE:** Public Health — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 9 ayes — Delisi, Laubenberg, Truitt, Coleman, Dawson, Jackson, McReynolds, Solis, Zedler
- 0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For — Joseph Hill, Texas Medical Association; Mark Laney, Cook Children's Physician Network; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Robert Feather, Cook Children's Health Care System; Bryan Sperry, Children's Hospital Association of Texas)
- Against — None
- On — Jaime Garanflo, Donald Patrick, Texas State Board of Medical Examiners
- BACKGROUND:** Under the Occupations Code, an applicant for a medical license in Texas must pass each part of the United States Medical Licensing Examination within seven years. An applicant who is a graduate of a program that awards a dual degree (both a doctor of philosophy and a doctor of medicine degree or doctor of osteopathy degree) must pass each part of the exam within two years of being awarded the second degree.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 567 would extend the deadline for passing the medical licensing examination to 10 years for all applicants who:
- were specialty board certified by the American Board of Medical Specialties or the Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists; or
 - had practiced under a faculty temporary license for at least 12 months and were recommended to the Texas State Board of Medical Examiners by the chief administrative officer and the president of the institution where the applicant practiced under that license.

The bill also would change the deadline for dual degree applicants from within two years of receiving the second degree to within two years of completing residency training.

CSHB 567 would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2005. The bill would apply to applications filed or pending at the Texas State Board of Medical Examiners on the effective date.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

The deadline extensions in CSHB 567 for passing the medical licensing examination would help Texas recruit medical professionals by removing a barrier to licensure. While most medical students follow the medical school, residency, examination route, some have the opportunity to study in fellowship programs that may cause delays taking the required examinations. These fellowship programs often are in other countries or in specialized medical fields, and they add significant value to the medical knowledge a candidate can bring to Texas. However, candidates may be reluctant to come to Texas because they would be ineligible for licenses.

Foreign candidates also would find Texas a more attractive place to practice under this new law. Obtaining a visa and polishing language skills can take some time, leaving some foreign doctors with little time to prepare for the examination.

CSHB 567 also would make the examination requirements more reasonable for dual degree applicants who may complete their second degrees and then be burdened by other academic requirements in addition to the state licensing exam. Instead of requiring them to divert attention from training, the bill would permit them to complete their residency, then take the exam.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The current law is generous and has worked well for the more than 2,700 physicians who have obtained licensure in Texas in the last two years. Instead of changing the law for a few, specialized cases, Texas should consider authorizing the Medical Board to grant extensions to the few individuals subject to unique circumstances.

**OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The dual degree deadline extension is a good idea and should be extended to people who complete master's level programs. Many complementary master's programs would contribute to a better educated medical work

force, such as master's programs in public health. Those dual degree applicants also must complete residency and should have their deadlines extended.

NOTES:

The bill as filed included only the provision relating to dual degree applicants.

The companion bill, SB 424 by Carona, passed the Senate on April 7 on the Local and Uncontested Calendar and was reported favorably, without amendment, by the House Public Health Committee on April 27, making it eligible to be considered in lieu of HB 567.

During the 2003 regular session, a similar bill, SB 787 by Carona, passed the Senate and was reported favorably by the House Public Health Committee, but died on the General State Calendar.