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AB-1395 Licensed Physicians and Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program: requirements. (2023-2024)

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Assembly Bill No. 1395

CHAPTER 205

An act to amend Section 853 of the Business and Professions Code, relating to healing arts, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

[Approved by Governor September 22, 2023. Filed with Secretary of State September 22, 2023.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1395, Garcia. Licensed Physicians and Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program: requirements.

Existing law governs professions and vocations that are regulated by various boards within the Department of Consumer Affairs, including the Medical Board of California and the Dental Board of California. Existing law requires those boards to require a licensee, at the time of issuance of a license, to provide specified federal taxpayer information, including the applicant's social security number or individual taxpayer identification number. Existing law prohibits a licensing board from processing an application for an initial license unless the applicant provides that information where requested on the application.

Existing law, the Licensed Physicians and Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program, allows licensed physicians and dentists from Mexico to be issued a license by the Medical Board of California or a permit by the Dental Board of California to practice medicine or dentistry in California for a period not to exceed 3 years and establishes requirements for the participants in the program, as specified.

This bill would, for purposes of the pilot program, notwithstanding the above-described requirements to provide specified federal taxpayer information, require the Medical Board of California to issue a 3-year nonrenewable license to an applicant who has not provided an individual taxpayer identification number or social security number if the applicant meets specified conditions. Pursuant to these conditions, the applicant would be required to immediately seek an appropriate 3-year visa and social security number from the federal government within 14 days of being issued the medical license and immediately provide the medical board with their social security number within 10 days of issuance of that card by the federal government. The bill would prohibit the applicant from engaging in the practice of medicine until the board determines that these conditions have been met. The bill would require the board to notify the applicant of their eligibility to practice medicine if the board determines the applicant has met these conditions.

This bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

Vote: 2/3 Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 853 of the Business and Professions Code is amended to read:

- 853.** (a) The Licensed Physicians and Dentists from Mexico Pilot Program is hereby created. This program shall allow up to 30 licensed physicians specializing in family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, and obstetrics and gynecology, and up to 30 licensed dentists from Mexico to practice medicine or dentistry in California for a period not to exceed three years, in accordance with this section. The program shall also maintain an alternate list of program participants.
- (b) The Medical Board of California shall issue three-year nonrenewable licenses to practice medicine to licensed Mexican physicians and the Dental Board of California shall issue three-year nonrenewable permits to practice dentistry to licensed Mexican dentists.
- (c) Physicians from Mexico eligible to participate in this program shall comply with the following:
- (1) Be licensed, certified or recertified, and in good standing in their medical specialty in Mexico. This certification or recertification shall be performed, as appropriate, by the Consejo Mexicano de Ginecología y Obstetricia, A.C., the Consejo Mexicano de Certificación en Medicina Familiar, A.C., the Consejo Mexicano de Medicina Interna, A.C., or the Consejo Mexicano de Certificación en Pediatría, A.C.
 - (2) Prior to leaving Mexico, each physician shall have completed the following requirements:
 - (A) Passed the board review course with a score equivalent to that registered by United States applicants when passing a board review course for the United States certification examination in each of the physician's specialty areas and passed an interview examination developed by the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) for each specialty area. Family practitioners who include obstetrics and gynecology in their practice shall also be required to have appropriately documented, as specified by United States standards, 50 live births. Mexican obstetricians and gynecologists shall be fellows in good standing of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.
 - (B) (i) Satisfactorily completed a six-month orientation program that addressed medical protocol, community clinic history and operations, medical administration, hospital operations and protocol, medical ethics, the California medical delivery system, health maintenance organizations and managed care practices, and pharmacology differences. This orientation program shall be approved by the Medical Board of California to ensure that it contains the requisite subject matter and meets appropriate California law and medical standards where applicable.
 - (ii) Additionally, Mexican physicians participating in the program shall be required to be enrolled in adult English-as-a-second-language (ESL) classes that focus on both verbal and written subject matter. Each physician participating in the program shall have transcripts sent to the Medical Board of California from the appropriate Mexican university showing enrollment and satisfactory completion of these classes.
 - (C) Representatives from the UNAM in Mexico and a medical school in good standing or a facility conducting an approved medical residency training program in California shall confer to develop a mutually agreed upon distant learning program for the six-month orientation program required pursuant to subparagraph (B).
 - (3) Upon satisfactory completion of the requirements in paragraphs (1) and (2), and after having received their three-year nonrenewable medical license, the Mexican physicians shall be required to obtain continuing education pursuant to Section 2190. Each physician shall obtain an average of 25 continuing education units per year for a total of 75 units for a full three years of program participation.
 - (4) Upon satisfactory completion of the requirements in paragraphs (1) and (2), the applicant shall receive a three-year nonrenewable license to work in nonprofit community health centers and shall also be required to participate in a six-month externship at the applicant's place of employment. This externship shall be undertaken after the participant has received a license and is able to practice medicine. The externship shall ensure that the participant is complying with the established standards for quality assurance of nonprofit community health centers and medical practices. The externship shall be affiliated with a medical school in good standing in California. Complaints against program participants shall follow the same procedures contained in the Medical Practice Act (Chapter 5 (commencing with Section 2000)).
 - (5) After arriving in California, Mexican physicians participating in the program shall be required to be enrolled in adult ESL classes at institutions approved by the Bureau of Private Post Secondary and Vocational Education or accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. These classes shall focus on verbal and written subject matter to assist a physician in obtaining a level of proficiency in English that is commensurate with the level of English spoken at community clinics where the physician will practice. The community clinic employing a physician shall submit documentation confirming approval of an ESL program to the board for verification. Transcripts of satisfactory completion of the ESL classes shall be submitted to the Medical Board of California as proof of compliance with this provision.
 - (6) (A) Nonprofit community health centers employing Mexican physicians in the program shall be required to have medical quality assurance protocols and either be accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations or

have protocols similar to those required by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations. These protocols shall be submitted to the Medical Board of California prior to the hiring of Mexican physicians.

(B) In addition, after the program participant successfully completes the six-month externship program, a free standing health care organization that has authority to provide medical quality certification, including, but not limited to, health plans, hospitals, and the Integrated Physician Association, is responsible for ensuring and overseeing the compliance of nonprofit community health centers medical quality assurance protocols, conducting site visits when necessary, and developing any additional protocols, surveys, or assessment tools to ensure that quality of care standards through quality assurance protocols are being appropriately followed by physicians participating in the program.

(7) Participating hospitals shall have the authority to establish criteria necessary to allow individuals participating in this three-year pilot program to be granted hospital privileges in their facilities.

(8) The Medical Board of California shall provide oversight review of both the implementation of this program and the evaluation required pursuant to subdivision (k). The board shall consult with the medical schools applying for funding to implement and evaluate this program, executive and medical directors of nonprofit community health centers wanting to employ program participants, and hospital administrators who will have these participants practicing in their hospital, as it conducts its oversight responsibilities of this program and evaluation. Any funding necessary for the implementation of this program, including the evaluation and oversight functions, shall be secured from nonprofit philanthropic entities. Implementation of this program may not proceed unless appropriate funding is secured from nonprofit philanthropic entities. The board shall report to the Legislature every January during which the program is operational regarding the status of the program and the ability of the program to secure the funding necessary to carry out its required provisions. Notwithstanding Section 11005 of the Government Code, the board may accept funds from nonprofit philanthropic entities. The board shall, upon appropriation in the annual Budget Act, expend funds received from nonprofit philanthropic entities for this program.

(d) (1) Dentists from Mexico eligible to participate in this program shall comply with the following requirements or the requirements contained in paragraph (2):

(A) Be graduates from the National Autonomous University of Mexico School of Faculty Dentistry (Facultad de Odontología).

(B) Meet all criteria required for licensure in Mexico that is required and being applied by the National Autonomous University of Mexico School of Faculty Dentistry (Facultad de Odontología), including, but not limited to:

(i) A minimum grade point average.

(ii) A specified English language comprehension and conversational level.

(iii) Passage of a general examination.

(iv) Passage of an oral interview.

(C) Enroll and complete an orientation program that focuses on the following:

(i) Practical issues in pharmacology that shall be taught by an instructor who is affiliated with a California dental school approved by the Dental Board of California.

(ii) Practical issues and diagnosis in oral pathology that shall be taught by an instructor who is affiliated with a California dental school approved by the Dental Board of California.

(iii) Clinical applications that shall be taught by an instructor who is affiliated with a California dental school approved by the Dental Board of California.

(iv) Biomedical sciences that shall be taught by an instructor who is affiliated with a California dental school approved by the Dental Board of California.

(v) Clinical history management that shall be taught by an instructor who is affiliated with a California dental school approved by the Dental Board of California.

(vi) Special patient care that shall be taught by an instructor who is affiliated with a California dental school approved by the Dental Board of California.

(vii) Sedation techniques that shall be taught by an instructor who is affiliated with a California dental school approved by the Dental Board of California.

(viii) Infection control guidelines that shall be taught by an instructor who is affiliated with a California dental school approved by the Dental Board of California.

(ix) Introduction to health care systems in California.

(x) Introduction to community clinic operations.

(2) (A) Graduate within the three-year period prior to enrollment in the program, from a foreign dental school that has received provisional approval or certification by November of 2003 from the Dental Board of California under the Foreign Dental School Approval Program.

(B) Enroll and satisfactorily complete an orientation program that focuses on the health care system and community clinic operations in California.

(C) Enroll and satisfactorily complete a course taught by an approved foreign dental school on infection control approved by the Dental Board of California.

(3) Upon satisfactory completion to a competency level of the requirements in paragraph (1) or (2), dentists participating in the program shall be eligible to obtain employment in a nonprofit community health center pursuant to subdivision (f) within the structure of an extramural dental program for a period not to exceed three years.

(4) Dentists participating in the program shall be required to complete the necessary continuing education units required by the Dental Practice Act (Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 1600)).

(5) The program shall accept 30 participating dentists. The program shall also maintain an alternate list of program applicants. If an active program participant leaves the program for any reason, a participating dentist from the alternate list shall be chosen to fill the vacancy. Only active program participants shall be required to complete the orientation program specified in subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1).

(6) (A) Additionally, an extramural dental facility may be identified, qualified, and approved by the board as an adjunct to, and an extension of, the clinical and laboratory departments of an approved dental school.

(B) As used in this subdivision, "extramural dental facility" includes, but is not limited to, any clinical facility linked to an approved dental school for the purposes of monitoring or overseeing the work of a dentist licensed in Mexico participating in this program and that is employed by an approved dental school for instruction in dentistry that exists outside or beyond the walls, boundaries, or precincts of the primary campus of the approved dental school, and in which dental services are rendered. These facilities shall include nonprofit community health centers.

(C) Dental services provided to the public in these facilities shall constitute a part of the dental education program.

(D) Approved dental schools shall register extramural dental facilities with the board. This registration shall be accompanied by information supplied by the dental school pertaining to faculty supervision, scope of treatment to be rendered, arrangements for postoperative care, the name and location of the facility, the date operations shall commence at the facility, and a description of the equipment and facilities available. This information shall be supplemented with a copy of the agreement between the approved dental school and the affiliated institution establishing the contractual relationship. Any change in the information initially provided to the board shall be communicated to the board.

(7) The program shall also include issues dealing with program operations, and shall be developed in consultation by representatives of community clinics, approved dental schools, or the National Autonomous University of Mexico School of Faculty Dentistry (Facultad de Odontología).

(8) The Dental Board of California shall provide oversight review of the implementation of this program and the evaluation required pursuant to subdivision (k). The board shall consult with dental schools in California that have applied for funding to implement and evaluate this program and executive and dental directors of nonprofit community health centers wanting to employ program participants, as it conducts its oversight responsibilities of this program and evaluation. Implementation of this program may not proceed unless appropriate funding is secured from nonprofit philanthropic entities. The board shall report to the Legislature every January during which the program is operational regarding the status of the program and the ability of the program to secure the funding necessary to carry out its required provisions. Notwithstanding Section 11005 of the Government Code, the board may accept funds from nonprofit philanthropic entities.

(e) Nonprofit community health centers that employ participants shall be responsible for ensuring that participants are enrolled in local English-language instruction programs and that the participants attain English-language fluency at a level that would allow the participants to serve the English-speaking patient population when necessary and have the literacy level to communicate with appropriate hospital staff when necessary.

(f) Physicians and dentists from Mexico having met the applicable requirements set forth in subdivisions (c) and (d) shall be placed in a pool of candidates who are eligible to be recruited for employment by nonprofit community health centers in California, including, but not limited to, those located in the Counties of Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Imperial, Monterey, San Benito, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Santa Cruz, Yuba, Orange, Colusa, Glenn, Sutter, Kern, Tulare, Fresno, Stanislaus, San Luis Obispo, and San Diego. The Medical Board of California shall ensure that all Mexican physicians participating in this program have satisfactorily met the requirements set forth in subdivision (c) prior to placement at a nonprofit community health center.

(g) Nonprofit community health centers in the counties listed in subdivision (f) shall apply to the Medical Board of California and the Dental Board of California to hire eligible applicants who shall then be required to complete a six-month externship that includes working in the nonprofit community health center and a corresponding hospital. Once enrolled in this externship, and upon payment of the required fees, the Medical Board of California shall issue a three-year nonrenewable license to practice medicine and the Dental Board of California shall issue a three-year nonrenewable dental special permit to practice dentistry. For purposes of this program, the fee for a three-year nonrenewable license to practice medicine shall be nine hundred dollars (\$900) and the fee for a three-year nonrenewable dental permit shall be five hundred forty-eight dollars (\$548). A licensee or permitholder shall practice only in the nonprofit community health center that offered the licensee or permitholder employment and the corresponding hospital. This three-year nonrenewable license or permit shall be deemed to be a license or permit in good standing pursuant to the provisions of this chapter for the purpose of participation and reimbursement in all federal, state, and local health programs, including managed care organizations and health maintenance organizations.

(h) The three-year nonrenewable license or permit shall terminate upon notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the licensee's or permitholder's address of record, if, in the Medical Board of California or Dental Board of California's sole discretion, it has determined that either:

(1) The license or permit was issued by mistake.

(2) A complaint has been received by either board against the licensee or permitholder that warrants terminating the license or permit pending an investigation and resolution of the complaint.

(i) (1) Notwithstanding subdivisions (a) to (d), inclusive, of Section 30, the Medical Board of California shall issue a three-year nonrenewable license pursuant to this section to an applicant who has not provided an individual taxpayer identification number or social security number if the board staff determines the applicant is otherwise eligible for a license only under the Licensed Physicians from Mexico Pilot Program pursuant to this section, subject to the following conditions:

(A) The applicant shall immediately seek both an appropriate three-year visa and the accompanying social security number from the United States government within 14 days of being issued a medical license under this section.

(B) The applicant shall immediately provide to the Medical Board of California a social security number obtained in accordance with subparagraph (A) within 10 days of the federal government issuing the social security card related to the issued visa.

(C) The applicant shall not engage in the practice of medicine pursuant to this section until the Medical Board of California determines that the conditions in subparagraphs (A) and (B) have been met.

(2) The Medical Board of California, if it determines that an applicant has met the conditions in paragraph (1), shall notify the applicant that the applicant may engage in the practice of medicine under the license in accordance with this section.

(j) All applicable employment benefits, salary, and policies provided by nonprofit community health centers to their current employees shall be provided to medical and dental practitioners from Mexico participating in this pilot program. This shall include nonprofit community health centers providing malpractice insurance coverage.

(k) Beginning 12 months after this pilot program has commenced, an evaluation of the program shall be undertaken with funds provided from philanthropic foundations. The evaluation shall be conducted jointly by one medical school and one dental school in California and either UNAM or a foreign dental school approved by the Dental Board of California, in consultation with the Medical Board of California. If the evaluation required pursuant to this section does not begin within 15 months after the pilot project has commenced, the evaluation may be performed by an independent consultant selected by the Director of Consumer Affairs. This evaluation shall include, but not be limited to, the following issues and concerns:

(1) Quality of care provided by doctors and dentists licensed under this pilot program.

(2) Adaptability of these licensed practitioners to California medical and dental standards.

(3) Impact on working and administrative environment in nonprofit community health centers and impact on interpersonal relations with medical licensed counterparts in health centers.

(4) Response and approval by patients.

(5) Impact on cultural and linguistic services.

(6) Increases in medical encounters provided by participating practitioners to limited-English-speaking patient populations and increases in the number of limited-English-speaking patients seeking health care services from nonprofit community health centers.

(7) Recommendations on whether the program should be continued, expanded, altered, or terminated.

(8) Progress reports on available data listed shall be provided to the Legislature on achievable time intervals beginning the second year of implementation of this pilot program. An interim final report shall be issued three months before termination of this pilot program. A final report shall be submitted to the Legislature at the time of termination of this pilot program on all of the above data. The final report shall reflect and include how other initiatives concerning the development of culturally and linguistically competent medical and dental providers within California and the United States are impacting communities in need of these health care providers.

(l) Costs for administering this pilot program shall be secured from philanthropic entities.

(m) Program applicants shall be responsible for working with the governments of Mexico and the United States in order to obtain the necessary three-year visa required for program participation.

SEC. 2. This act is an urgency statute necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within the meaning of Article IV of the California Constitution and shall go into immediate effect. The facts constituting the necessity are:

In order to allow licensed physicians from Mexico to be issued a license by the Medical Board of California pursuant to Section 853 of the Business and Professions Code as soon as possible, and to ensure that those physicians are able to provide vital medical services throughout the timeframe of their license, thereby preserving the health of Californians, it is necessary for this act to take effect immediately.