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AB-659 Master of Divinity: physician and surgeon: title. (2025-2026)

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CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 659

Introduced by Assembly Member Berman

February 14, 2025

An act to add Section 600 to the Business and Professions Code, relating to advertising.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 659, as introduced, Berman. Master of Divinity: physician and surgeon: title.

Existing law, the Medical Practice Act, establishes the Medical Board of California within the Department of Consumer Affairs and sets forth its powers and duties relating to the licensure and regulation of physicians and surgeons.

Existing law prohibits a person from using the words “doctor” or “physician,” the letters or prefix “Dr.,” the initials “M.D.,” or any other terms or letters indicating or implying that the person is a physician and surgeon, physician, surgeon, or practitioner, unless the person has been issued a physician’s and surgeon’s certificate by the board, and makes a violation of these provisions a crime.

This bill would specifically prohibit a person who has earned a Master of Divinity from displaying the title “MDiv” or “M.D.i.v.” in a communication or advertisement relating to the person’s practice unless the title is clearly distinguishable from the title “MD” or “M.D.” The bill would provide that prohibited displays include, but are not limited to, using different colors, fonts, or font sizes in a way that makes the “MD” or “M.D.” more prominent than the “iv” or “i.v.” The bill would provide that a person who violates this provision is not subject to criminal penalties, as specified.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

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

SECTION 1. Section 600 is added to the Business and Professions Code, immediately preceding Section 601, to read:

600. A person who has earned a Master of Divinity shall not display the title “MDiv” or “M.D.i.v.” in a communication or advertisement relating to the person’s practice unless the title is clearly distinguishable from the title “MD” or “M.D.” Prohibited displays include, but are not limited to, using different colors, fonts, or font sizes in a way that makes the “MD” or “M.D.” more

prominent than the “iv” or “i.v.” A person who violates this section shall not be subject to the criminal penalties set forth in Section 2054.