

VERMONT MEDICAL SOCIETY

Date: March 29, 2018

To: House Health Care Committee

From: Jessa Barnard, VMS Executive Director

Re: S. 253, An act relating to Vermont's adoption of the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact

Thank you for allowing the Vermont Medical Society to testify before you today regarding S. 253 on behalf of our over 2000 physician and physician assistant members. **VMS supports S. 253 as passed the House and the adoption by Vermont of the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact.** The Compact is poised to strengthen Vermont's physician work force by both allowing physicians to become newly-licensed in Vermont more quickly and make it easier for Vermont-based physicians to obtain licenses in additional states.

What is the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact?

The Interstate Medical Licensure Compact offers a new, voluntary expedited pathway to licensure for qualified physicians (both medical doctors or MDs and doctors of osteopathy or Dos) who wish to practice in multiple states. The IMLC mission is to increase access to health care for patients in underserved or rural areas and allow them to more easily connect with medical experts through the use of telemedicine technologies. While making it easier for physicians to obtain licenses to practice in multiple states, the Compact strengthens public protection by enhancing the ability of states to share investigative and disciplinary information.

The IMLC is an agreement currently in effect between 22 states and the 29 Medical and Osteopathic Boards in those states. Under this agreement licensed physicians can qualify to practice medicine across state lines within the Compact if they meet the agreed upon eligibility requirements. Nationwide, approximately 80% of physicians meet the criteria for licensure through the IMLC. In Vermont, using Nov 2016 licensing data, 2,706 actively licensed physicians (85%) would be eligible for the compact licensure (MD and DO). The Application process is expedited by leveraging the physicians existing information previously submitted in their state of principal license (SPL). The SPL will verify the physician's information and conduct a fresh background check. Once qualified the Physician may select any number of Compact states for which they desire to practice.

The basic process of applying through the compact is as follows (see <http://www.imlcc.org/what-is-the-process/>):

1. Physician selects and is licensed in a State of Principle Licensure (SPL)
2. Physician applies for Compact license via State of Principle Licensure
3. State of Principle Licensure verifies eligibility and issues Letter of Qualification
4. Physician selects additional Member States in which he/she wishes to be licensed
5. Member state medical board(s) issue license(s)

The following reflects the fees and costs to participate in the Compact:

1. For states – The Commission has decided that there is currently no cost to a state to participate in the Compact
2. For physicians – The cost to a physician to participate in the Compact is:
 - a. Initial licensing cost = before applying to participate in the Compact, a physician must designate and be licensed in a State of Principle Licensure and pay full license fee to that state
 - b. Application Costs = \$700; \$400 will go to the Commission & \$300 to the State of Principal Licensure to cover the cost of verifying the physician’s credentials PLUS
 - c. Compact License Costs - Each state’s medical board sets the fee for a medical license facilitated by the Compact process. So if Vermont were to join the Compact, the Vermont Board of Medical Practice would establish the fee for a physician to receive a Compact license, so long as it’s not more than the fee for an initial medical license. The costs in existing member states now range from \$75-750

The Compact is Voluntary

The IMLC does not create any requirements for any physician who does not choose to use the IMLC procedure to obtain a license. Physicians will still be free to apply directly to the medical boards in Vermont or other states – whether they do not meet the qualifications to apply through the Compact or simply chose not to do so.

Disciplinary Process

State medical boards participating in the Compact are required to share complaint/investigative information with each other. The license to practice medicine may be revoked by any or all of the compact states based on the action of the SPL or other compact state. That said, any action taken on a physician’s license must be consistent with that state’s rules and regulations. So, for example, Vermont could not sanction a physician for something that they did in California that is not against the law or considered unprofessional conduct in Vermont, just by virtue of a physician holding a California license obtained through the Compact. Any state medical board can undo any action taken automatically on a physician’s license because of another Compact state’s action against the physician’s license

Governance

The IMLC is governed by a Commission. This Commission, as all bodies created as entities operating multistate compacts, is a joint venture operated by its member states. The Commission is directed by the voting commissioners, who represent their states. After joining the Compact, Vermont would have two seats on the Commission. Legally, the IMLCC is no different from the hundreds of compact bodies that allow the states to cooperate to find solutions together. Other examples are regional transportation authorities, regional pollution control efforts, and interstate school compacts.

Thank you for considering our comments on S. 253 and we ask that the House Health Care Committee support this important workforce development bill. Please let us know if you have further questions.