



ANA-Vermont
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Senator Virginia Lyons
Chair Health and Welfare Committee
109 State St. Montpelier, VT.

Honorable Senator Virginia Lyons,

I am writing to you about S.125 an act relating to Vermont's adoption of the interstate Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC).

As you may recall, ANA-Vermont initially had some concerns about the compact after hearing from Compact members of other states who reported they did not feel their input related to policy was heard at national meetings, and that the discipline of nurses at the state Board of Nursing (BON) level could be preempted by the Compact authority. Vermont's Board of Nursing would be given jurisdiction over investigations started locally; however, investigations initiated in remote states where the nurse practiced on a Compact license can be different. A complaint can be investigated by the home state but it is usually the state where the nurse is practicing that leads the investigation for practical reasons, such as ease of attaining information. Both states can pursue the investigation at the same time.

The recent update was particularly important where it mentioned how a nurse can only hold one Compact license, issued by the nurse's "home state" their primary state of residence. Once a nurse moves to a new home state, the nurse must apply for a new license in that (home) state, and the prior home state Compact license is deactivated. If the new home state is not a Compact state, the prior home state license converts to a single-state (standard) license.

Not renewing a nurse license is a criminal offense, and a nurse moving to a non-compact state such as New York likely would consider the license would stay active until the next cycle, despite their move. Some might try to work every other weekend or per diem during the transition to a new location, so it would be beneficial for the deactivation to wait a few months, or a lower cost switch to individual license.

Though many other states may require mandatory continuing education, the Compact did not require Vermont nurses to add mandatory education. Practice of telemedicine across borders should be easier, with less concern regarding the location of patient or practitioner (where the patient is, versus the nurse).

Nurses are concerned about increasing costs of licensure, noting the loss of revenue to the Office of Professional Regulation(OPR). Fees increased in 2019 to \$190 for RN's and \$175 for LPN's, but with the expected budget gap of nearly \$1 million, and the compact participation fee of \$6000 a year as well as IT needs, there is talk of fees as high as \$270 for licensure. In 2021 the impact of the increased fees of 2019 will impact RNs due for re-licensure every two years. We should be cognizant that the states surrounding us all have lower licensure fees. Maine's re-licensure is \$75, New Hampshire is \$120 (every 2 years) and New York is \$143 every four years (2019 State-by-State guide).

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Federal criminal background checks would be required with the Compact, and background checks can run from \$10 to \$200 (Richardson, 2020); however, the Vermont Crime Information Center mentioned the cost for a criminal conviction report was \$30. Fingerprinting can be another \$25. I notice that Maine's Board of Nursing (2020) charges an additional \$52 for their background check. Whether the background check fee is included in the licensure fee, or in addition to the added cost is a concern to nurses, particularly if the frequency is more than once initially, such as recurring with each licensure. Criminal background checks required in nursing schools are paid for by the student. It would be useful for students who had a background check done, to be able to use it again if within the same year for licensure, rather than paying for multiple checks, particularly for students under financial duress.

The Secretary of State OPR Report *Multi-State Nursing Licensure Compact: The Costs and Benefits for Vermont* (2019) shared that 52.8% of Vermont's resident nurses support joining the NLC with a fee increase, but >90% are supportive if there is no fee increase. Please make sure the cost of relicensing stays low and competitive with neighbor states to avoid driving nurses away.

The nurses who most strongly in support of the compact who I have spoken with, are employers hoping to make onboarding to their organization easier, and new students who want flexibility, but most other nurses like the idea. Being part of a compact state would facilitate traveling nurses and new nurses from other states coming to fill vacancies more easily. Nurse leaders with staffing shortages hope that being part of the compact will facilitate on-boarding of new nurses from outside states; however, it also facilitates nurses being able to cross borders after receiving their license to collect sign-on bonuses in near states. Student nurses see this as a way to be able to practice in multiple states, not just Vermont. Maine and New Hampshire are part of the compact. For example, Dartmouth has sign-on bonuses, which could mean losing some graduates. Yet, this may facilitate salary competition, which has been an issue. Additionally, Vermont has a lower population than neighboring states, so by concentration alone, we should gain more nurses than we lose. Most nurses in Vermont support the compact. It is not a silver bullet to solve the workforce problem, but it will make it easier for nurses to cross borders to practice here, and Vermont is an attractive state. Hence, ANA-Vermont supports the compact.

Thank-you for your time,

Meredith Roberts, RN PhD
ANA-VT Executive Director

References:

2019 State-by-State guide to RN Licensure- eNLC update: <https://nurse.org/articles/guide-to-registered-nurse-licensure-by-state/>

Maine Board of Nursing.(2020). Instructions for obtaining Criminal Background Checks
<https://www.maine.gov/boardofnursing/licensing/criminal-background-check.html>

Richardson, R. (2019).How much does a background check cost? *USATrace*
<https://www.usatrace.com/how-much-does-a-background-check-cost/>

Vermont Crime Information Center <https://vcic.vermont.gov/ch-information/record-checks/faq>