



## World Education Services Statement of Support for S 142

World Education Services (WES) supports S 142, which would create an alternative pathway to medical licensure for eligible internationally trained physicians to practice medicine in Vermont.

The United States currently faces a serious shortage of practicing physicians<sup>1</sup> in both primary and specialty care—a gap that is projected to widen over the coming decade. States across the country are seeking a way to ensure that all citizens, especially those in rural and underserved communities, have sufficient access to medical care. Vermont faces a critical shortage of primary care providers—115 FTEs below national benchmarks in 2022, with projections rising to a 370 FTE deficit by 2030 across family medicine, internal medicine, OB/GYN, and pediatrics.<sup>2</sup> Although federal shortage designations are limited, rural areas, particularly in northern counties, experience high population-to-provider ratios that compromise access and continuity of care.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the 2024 Vermont State Health Assessment identifies language barriers among immigrant and refugee communities as a leading obstacle to accessing health care. Internationally trained physicians, with their linguistic and cultural competencies, can help close these gaps and foster stronger, more resilient communities by improving access, equity, and trust in care.<sup>4</sup>

Yet systemic barriers prevent many internationally trained physicians from being able to practice medicine in the U.S. Legislation that provides an alternative license pathway to internationally trained physicians allow states to benefit from the education, skills, and experience of a larger pool of qualified practitioners.

We also encourage Vermont to revisit the current draft requirement that applicants must have practiced medicine for three of the past five years preceding their application. This threshold could unintentionally exclude highly qualified physicians who have faced protracted

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<sup>1</sup> “AAMC Report Reinforces Mounting Physician Shortage.” Association of American Medical Colleges, (June 11, 2021). <https://www.aamc.org/news/press-releases/aamc-report-reinforces-mounting-physician-shortage>.

<sup>2</sup> Vermont Legislative Research Service, Addressing the Shortage of Healthcare Workers in Vermont (June 2024), <https://www.uvm.edu/d10-files/documents/2024-06/Addressing-the-Shortage-of-Healthcare-Workers.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> “Shifts in the Vermont Public Health Workforce: Impacts Post-Pandemic and Needed Remediations,” VtPHA (Apr. 11, 2025), <https://vtpha.org/shifts-in-the-vermont-public-health-workforce-impacts-post-pandemic-and-needed-remediations/>

<sup>4</sup> 2024 Vermont State Health Assessment Report (Vermont Department of Health), <https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/document/2024-vermont-state-health-assessment-report.pdf>



displacement or barriers to practice—circumstances common among internationally trained doctors. **We have seen this standard become a significant barrier in other contexts, limiting access to talented physicians who are ready to contribute.**

We recommend that Vermont change the existing language to: “The applicant has practiced as a physician in his or her country of practice for at least one year within the last seven years, preceding the application, or has a waiver from the board.” By expanding the recency of practice requirement beyond the current three-of-five-year definition, Vermont can give capable internationally trained physicians the opportunity to demonstrate their skills to employers in need of talent. An expanded definition for recency of practice would position Vermont as a leader in attracting talent from across state lines and globally, while maintaining strong guardrails as no applicant can access this pathway without an offer of employment from an eligible health care provider in Vermont. This ensures that employers facing acute workforce shortages have a real opportunity to utilize this pathway to strengthen care delivery in underserved communities.

S 142 will help address Vermont’s physician shortage and promote access to quality care for all state residents by making licensing pathways more accessible for eligible internationally trained physicians in the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement of support.

*WES is a non-profit social enterprise that supports the educational, economic, and social inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and international students. For 50 years, WES has set the standard for international academic credential evaluation, supporting millions of people as they seek to achieve their academic and professional goals. Through decades of experience as a leader in global education, WES has developed a wide range of tools to pursue social impact at scale. From evaluating academic credentials to shaping policy, designing programs, and providing philanthropic funding, we partner with a diverse set of organizations, leaders, and networks to uplift individuals and drive systems change. Together with its partners, WES enables people to learn, work, and thrive in new places.*