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Written Testimony before Senate Health and Welfare Services

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Bi-State Primary Care Association

RE: S.142, An Act relating to a pathway to licensure for internationally trained physicians and medical graduates

Dear Chair Lyons and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of S.142, An act relating to a pathway to licensure for internationally trained physicians and medical graduates.

Bi-State is a nonprofit organization focused on advancing access to comprehensive primary care and preventive services for all, with special emphasis on those most in need in New Hampshire and Vermont. Bi-State's members include community health centers, federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), clinics for the uninsured, networks, and consortia. Today, Bi-State represents 26 member organizations that provide comprehensive primary care services to over 330,000 patients at 174 locations. Bi-State also operates the Recruitment Center, the only local non-profit recruitment resource supporting practices in Vermont (and New Hampshire) focusing on recruiting primary care physicians, advanced practice providers, dentists, hygienists and mental health and substance use treatment professionals for the state.

The Recruitment Center was created in 1994, in partnership with the State of New Hampshire and funding it received from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, for the purpose of building infrastructure to increase access to primary care services. Over the last 30 years, Bi-State's Recruitment Center has recruited more than 700 providers to organizations across both Vermont and New Hampshire. Most of these health professionals (75%) went to practice in federally designated health professional shortage areas. The Recruitment Center regularly assists rural hospitals, FQHCs, community mental health centers, and private practices with their recruitment needs.

Despite our efforts, additional resources are needed to meet the clinical staffing needs in Vermont health care facilities, especially as a significant percentage of the primary care workforce is nearing retirement age. By streamlining the pathway for internationally trained physicians to work in the U.S., S.142 gives practices across Vermont an additional tool as they compete regionally and nationally to recruit qualified health professionals. Sufficient health

care workforce is essential to ensure that we can maintain and increase access to primary care for our residents. This bill will build on Vermont's current efforts in educating, training, recruiting, and retaining essential primary care providers.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this issue, and I am happy to address questions committee members may have.