

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based only on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: SB 1500

SPONSOR: Senator Saunders

SUBJECT: Physician Assistants

DATE: March 27, 1999 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Munroe</u>	<u>Wilson</u>	<u>HC</u>	<u>Favorable</u>
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The bill allows any person who has completed all the course requirements of the Master of Medical Science Physician Assistant Program offered through the Florida College of Physician's Assistants prior to its closure in August of 1996, to be eligible for licensure as a physician assistant in Florida under the alternate licensing requirements for certain foreign medical graduates.

Before taking the required examination, such applicant must successfully complete any clinical rotations that were not completed under the Master of Medical Science Physician Assistant Program offered through the Florida College of Physician's Assistants Program and any additional clinical rotations with an appropriate physician assistant preceptor, not to exceed 6 months, that are determined necessary by the Council on Physician Assistants. The Board of Medicine and the Board of Osteopathic Medicine will determine, based on recommendations from the Council of Physician Assistants, the facilities where such clinical rotations may be completed by the applicant, and determine what constitutes successful completion. The requirements for clinical rotations must be comparable to those established by an accredited physician assistant program.

The alternate licensing requirements for persons who have completed all the course requirements of the Master of Medical Science Physician Assistant Program offered through the Florida College of Physician's Assistants prior to its closure in August of 1996, is repealed on July 1, 2001.

This bill substantially amends section 458.347, Florida Statutes, 1998 Supplement.

II. Present Situation:

Sections 458.347 and 459.022, F.S., provide licensure requirements for the regulation of physician assistants by the Council on Physician Assistants, the Board of Medicine and the Board of Osteopathic Medicine under the Department of Health. In order to obtain a license, a physician

assistant must complete a physician assistant training program approved by the Board of Medicine and the Board of Osteopathic Medicine, pass a national proficiency examination, provide a sworn statement of any prior felony convictions or any previous revocation or denial of licensure or certification in any state, and submit two letters of recommendation. The Board of Medicine and the Board of Osteopathic Medicine may approve physician assistant programs, based on recommendations by the Council of Physician Assistants, for the education and training of physician assistants which meet standards established by rule of the boards. The Council of Physician Assistants may recommend only those physician assistant programs that hold full accreditation or provisional accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Programs or its successor organization.

Section 458.347, F.S., provides alternate licensure requirements for unlicensed physicians who are graduates of foreign medical schools. To qualify for physician assistant licensure under the Board of Medicine these applicants must meet the following requirements: have applied for certification as a physician assistant in Florida between July 1, 1990, and June 30, 1991; be a Florida resident on July 1, 1990, or have physician assistant certification in any other state in the United States on July 1, 1990; and be certified by the Board of Medicine as having met certain requirements of licensure as a medical doctor.

The applicants under the alternate licensure requirements, must pass an examination developed or purchased by the Department of Health, including a practical component, that adequately measures an applicant's ability to practice with reasonable skill and safety. The Department of Health may not require an applicant to pass a separate practical component of the examination. For examinations given after July 1, 1998, competencies measured through practical examinations must be incorporated into the written examination through a multiple-choice format. The department, with the advice of the Board of Medicine, must establish the minimum score for successful passage of the examination. The Department of Health must translate the examination into the native language of any applicant who requests and agrees to pay all costs of the translation. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to communicate in English by obtaining a passing score on the Test for spoken English by the Educational Testing Service, the test of English as a foreign language, a high school or college level English course, or the English examination for citizenship, Immigration and Naturalization Service. The Department of Health may administer the examination for a total of five times at 1-year intervals. As of March, 1999, the examination has been given three times and a fourth administration is scheduled for August, 1999, and the fifth and final examination is scheduled for administration in November, 2000.

The former Florida College of Physician's Assistants (FCPA) that closed in 1996 offered a master's level physician assistant program. The former Florida College of Physician's Assistants was a free-standing physician assistant program that was licensed by the State Board of Independent Colleges and Universities, Florida Department of Education, that had no institutional accreditation, and was unaffiliated with a college, university, or hospital. According to the State Board of Independent Colleges and Universities (SBICU), approximately 40 students enrolled in the program at Florida College of Physician's Assistants. The college sought and failed to achieve accreditation for its program. New professional schools are licensed by SBICU and most professional accrediting agencies will not accept applications for accreditation until a new school graduates its first class. In October 1995, FCPA received a six month extension of its Level II Provisional License while making attempts to become recognized by a national accrediting

agency. Attempts were made for an accredited institution to take over its program. Officials at SBICU indicated that, although the FCPA program failed to achieve accreditation, its physician assistant program was comparable to an accredited program.

As a result of its experience with FCPA and other state licensed educational programs, the SBICU has adopted administrative rules to require any new professional school that will offer degrees which purport or are understood to prepare graduates to practice a regulated profession to submit documentation of compliance with the requirements of the appropriate professional licensing body in the field of its proposed professional degree programs. The rule also requires the new professional school to disclose in writing to all its prospective students, faculty, staff, and investors, before receiving any commitments from them, that there will be a period of time during which the school cannot guarantee that graduates will be eligible to take professional examinations for licensure to practice the profession and that the school's licensure with SBICU may be denied, if the SBICU determines that school is not complying with professional licensure requirements, 6E-2.001, Florida Administrative Code.

On April 26, 1996, the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs granted the Accreditation Review Committee for Physician Assistants authority to award provisional accreditation. The status of provisional accreditation permits any new program that has not yet taken students to request an accreditation site visit. If the evaluation process is satisfactory, the program may earn provisional accreditation, which allows any student matriculating in that school to be considered a graduate from an accredited program. Students matriculating in a program that has provisional accreditation would also be eligible for state licensure in Florida and eligible to sit for the national examination for physician assistants.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill allows any person who has completed all the course requirements of the Master of Medical Science Physician Assistant Program offered through the Florida College of Physician's Assistants prior to its closure in August of 1996, to be eligible for licensure as a physician assistant in Florida under the alternate licensing requirements for certain foreign medical graduates. Before taking the examination, such applicant must successfully complete any clinical rotations that were not completed under the Master of Medical Science Physician Assistant Program offered through the Florida College of Physician's Assistants Program and any additional clinical rotations with an appropriate physician assistant preceptor, not to exceed 6 months, that are determined necessary by the Council on Physician Assistants.

The Board of Medicine and the Board of Osteopathic Medicine will determine, based on recommendations from the Council of Physician Assistants, the facilities where such clinical rotations may be completed by the applicant, and determine what constitutes successful completion. The requirements for clinical rotations must be comparable to those established by an accredited physician assistant program.

The alternate licensing requirements for persons who have completed all the course requirements of the Master of Medical Science Physician Assistant Program offered through the Florida College of Physician's Assistants prior to its closure in August of 1996, is repealed on July 1, 2001.

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 1999.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

The provisions of this bill have no impact on municipalities and the counties under the requirements of Article VII, Section 18 of the Florida Constitution.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

The provisions of this bill have no impact on public records or open meetings issues under the requirements of Article I, Subsections 24(a) and (b) of the Florida Constitution.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

The provisions of this bill have no impact on the trust fund restrictions under the requirements of Article III, Subsection 19(f) of the Florida Constitution.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

According to the Department of Health, the alternate physician licensure application fee is \$400 and the general written examination fee is \$100 and \$50 for the primary care portion of the examination, which totals \$550. Approximately 40 persons are eligible to sit for the examination under the bill.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Any person who has completed all the course requirements of the Master of Medical Science Physician Assistant Program offered through the Florida College of Physician's Assistants prior to its closure in August of 1996, will benefit to the extent that he or she is eligible for licensure as a physician assistant in Florida under the bill. Any person who needs to complete a clinical rotation as part of the physician assistant licensure requirements will incur costs to do so.

C. Government Sector Impact:

According to the Department of Health, it will incur additional costs to administer the examination and licensure of persons applying under the alternate physician assistant licensure provisions which will be offset by the payment of the examination and licensure fees by the applicants. The department estimates 40 applicants for the August 1999, administration of the examination and 20 applicants for the November 2000, administration. The department estimates it will collect revenue for the administration of the examination of \$22,000 for fiscal year 1999-2000, and \$11,000 for fiscal year 2000-2001.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's sponsor or the Florida Senate.
