

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. House Bill 1868

PRINTER NO. 2652

AMOUNT

See Fiscal Impact

FUND

Professional Licensure Augmentation Account
State Board of Medicine Restricted Account
State Board of Osteopathic Medicine Restricted Account
State Board of Podiatry Restricted Account

DATE INTRODUCED

September 15, 2021

PRIME SPONSOR

Representative Mako

DESCRIPTION

House Bill 1868 amends Title 63 (Professions and Occupations (State Licensed)) to provide for alternative licensure pathways for servicemembers, veterans and military spouses.

The bill requires the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs (bureau) to include a question on applications for licensure, renewal and reactivation whether the individual submitting the application is a servicemember, veteran or military spouse; to expedite military applicant applications; to update the Military Occupational Codes Crosswalk (crosswalk) as necessary to accommodate changes in a license or military skills, experience, credentials and education; to create criteria for temporary licensure at the discretion of each licensing board specific to a military applicant; and to post in the Pennsylvania Bulletin and each licensing board's website the license process for military applicants.

The bill permits a licensing board to issue a license to a military applicant who does not meet the educational requirements for a license, so long as the military applicant:

- Submits an application and fee as prescribed by the board;
- Passes all exams required for licensure;
- Has engaged in active practice for at least two of the previous five years before submitting the application. Relevant military service experience and official duties must be credited in the calculation of the number of years of practice in the profession;
- Meets all other noneducational requirements for licensure; and
- Has met the necessary qualifications outlined in the crosswalk.

House Bill 1868 permits a licensing board to issue a temporary license to a military applicant who:

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- Is assigned to a duty station in this Commonwealth or has established legal residence in the Commonwealth; and
- Complies with the licensing board's requirements for temporary licensure for a limited period of time at the discretion of the licensing board while the military applicant completes additional requirements for licensure in this Commonwealth.

The temporary license shall be valid until the earlier of:

- Six months after the date of issuance of the temporary license by the licensing board;
- The date the license is granted; or
- The date a notice to deny a license is issued.

The bill establishes a Military Occupational Codes Crosswalk to facilitate the acceptance of military practice or experience if training or education requirements for licensure are incomplete. The crosswalk shall include relevant experience obtained as a servicemember in calculating years of practice and experience in an occupation or profession and training and education requirements if they are substantially equivalent to those needed for licensure.

The bill permits an early renewal process for deployed service members prior to deployment. A servicemember may apply for early licensure renewal if the servicemember is deployed outside of the Commonwealth during the renewal cycle. If submitted, the licensing board must review the application and information, notify the servicemember of any deficiencies and process the application upon the next renewal period.

The bill permits license reactivation after deployment by allowing a servicemember to have a license renewed without penalty if the renewal period was during deployment outside of the Commonwealth. The servicemember has one month following the end of deployment to seek reactivation.

House Bill 1868 requires a licensing board to extend the requirement of completing continuing education or continued competency requirements for up to six months after the end of deployment outside of the Commonwealth if the servicemember meets all other licensure renewal requirements.

The bill permits a military spouse to utilize the early renewal, license activation and continuing education extension if the spouse resides with the servicemember during deployment outside of the Commonwealth.

The bill prohibits a licensing board from assessing an initial licensure fee on a military spouse who relocates to the Commonwealth as a result of the servicemember's military orders.

The bill requires the bureau to submit a report each year for the next six years to the chairpersons and minority chairpersons of the Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee and the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee and the House Professional Licensure Committee and the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee on:

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- The number of military applicants;
- The number of military applicants who were approved for licensure;
- The number of military applicants who were denied licensure including data of the reasons for denial;
- Data on the licensing board's application processing times for military applicants including reasons for delays; and
- Recommendations on ways to improve the licensing board's ability to meet the licensing needs of servicemembers, veterans and military spouses.

This act shall take effect in 120 days.

FISCAL IMPACT

According to the Department of State, the department expects one-time costs of approximately \$150,000 for IT changes to the Pennsylvania Licensure System. These costs are capable of being accommodated within funding amounts appropriated from restricted accounts to the department.

The legislation could also require the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs to hire additional staff which would be dependent upon the additional amount of work that could become necessary as a result of this legislation. If there are any staffing costs that cannot be accommodated within existing appropriations, the additional costs would be offset by increasing fees on licensee registrations and renewals.