

# Senate Health and Human Services Committee

*Sophie Walsh 271-3469*

**SB 457-FN**, relative to the licensing of international physicians.

**Hearing Date:** January 14, 2026

**Time Opened:** 1:00 p.m.

**Time Closed:** 1:16 p.m.

**Members of the Committee Present:** Senators Avard, Rochefort, Birdsell and Long

**Members of the Committee Absent:** Senator Prentiss

**Bill Analysis:** This bill allows for the granting of provisional and ultimately full licenses to international physicians.

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**Sponsors:**

Sen. Reardon

Sen. Rochefort

Sen. Fenton

Sen. Perkins Kwoka

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**Who supports the bill:** Sen. Reardon, Kristine Stoddard (Bi-State Primary Care Association), Ken Gordon (Coos County Family Health), Stephanie Pagliuca (Bi-State Primary Care Association), Laurie Harding (Legislative Commission on Interdisciplinary Primary Care Workforce), Sarah McCarthy, Rebecca Hoskins, Pamela DiNapoli, Lisa Bujno (Legislative Commission on Interdisciplinary Primary Care Workforce), Michaela Janowski, and Krysten Evans (ABLE NH).

**Who opposes the bill:** Julie Smith and Daniel Richardson.

**Who is neutral on the bill:** Ben Bradley (NH Hospital Association), Deanna Jurius (OPLC), and Jeffrey Singer.

**Summary of testimony presented:**

Senator Tara Reardon, Senate District 15

- Senator Reardon explained that she brought this bill forward on behalf of the Bi-State Primary Care Association.
- This bill is modeled off Tennessee statute. While the current bill is comprehensive in its coverage of qualifications, experience, and appeals processes for revoked licenses, the Office of Professional Licensure and Certification (OPLC) thinks we can maintain that comprehensiveness in a neater and shorter fashion.

- Senator Reardon emphasized that an amendment is forthcoming and deferred further testimony to the experts.

Kristine Stoddard, Bi-State Primary Care Association

- Ms. Stoddard emphasized that we have a health care workforce shortage in New Hampshire.
- Ms. Stoddard explained that she provided the bill's language to Senator Reardon knowing it would be amended and apologized to the medical community for any confusion that may have been caused by the initial draft of the bill.
- The bottom line is there are not enough people in this state or the country to fill physician slots. We need to make the pathway to licensure clearer.
- People who are educated and trained in other countries can already be licensed in New Hampshire. This bill simply makes this path easier to understand with a shorter timeline of practice.

Ken Gordon, Coos County Family Health

- Mr. Gordon stated that he is speaking in support of the bill.
- North country residents face a variety of challenges including economic disadvantages, an aging population, and higher rates of chronic disease, all with a shortage of medical providers in the region.
- One of Mr. Gordon's responsibilities as CEO is to recruit new physicians. This has become increasingly difficult as the current workforce is moving towards retirement, the supply of new providers is not keeping up with demand, and competition is increasing between provider organizations.
- Mr. Gordon emphasized that we need to use every available tool to fill these vacant positions. He shared a story about a physician he hired who was originally trained in England. That physician had to restart their education and training in the United States. While it eventually worked out in that situation, most people are not able to completely start over.
- This bill is a good step in the right direction that offers a reasonable and clearly defined path towards licensure, while ensuring appropriate safeguards remain in place.
- Senator Rochefort noted page 1 line 13 of the bill referencing language proficiency standards and asked if there would be any issues with implementing the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), as many other programs use it.
- Mr. Gordon said he does not see an issue with it, but there may be others in a better position to answer.

- Senator Rochefort asked if Mr. Gordon thinks there are areas where the residency requirements could be loosened, given that there are not many residency programs in place, while still maintaining adequate oversight.
- Mr. Gordon said he believes so. He believes the residency language needs to be reviewed.
- Senator Rochefort emphasized that we need to protect public health and safety while not putting too many barriers into a program like this.

Ben Bradley, New Hampshire Hospital Association

- Mr. Bradley provided the perspective of hospitals. They are generally supportive of licensing qualified international physicians in New Hampshire.
- Mr. Bradley emphasized the presence of workforce challenges and the need to make New Hampshire competitive in recruiting qualified physicians to provide services across the state.
- Mr. Bradley said he is happy to work with stakeholders on an amendment to ensure this moves forward appropriately if necessary.

Deanna Jurius, Office of Professional Licensure and Certification

- Director Jurius stated that OPLC is not taking a position on this bill.
- As drafted, this bill creates a new license-type for the provisional license.
- Chapter 302.01 of the Board of Medicine Laws and Rules specifically outlines educational requirements, which are nearly identical to the PLC section 313 rules.
- This already contemplates the scenario in which an individual completed post-graduate medical training in addition to their education and lays out the possible equivalents if there is no accreditation. The biggest difference is that current rules require 10 or more years of practice combined with proof of 2 years of post-graduate training. This bill requires 5 years.
- Director Jurius noted that rules can be waived for individual circumstances.
- Director Jurius believes this is already covered by the current process in place, but OPLC would be happy to work together with stakeholders to ensure this legislation moves forward in an operational manner.

Laurie Harding, Legislative Commission on the Interdisciplinary Primary Care Workforce

- Ms. Harding stated that she is a member of the Commission on the Interdisciplinary Primary Care Workforce.
- Ms. Harding expressed concern about the workforce shortages seen in New Hampshire, particularly in the area of primary care.
- Ms. Harding is supportive of this initiative, but recognizes that more work needs to be done.

- She emphasized that there are several Commission members willing to work with stakeholders to create something useful and efficient.