

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

S.B. 616  
By: Shapleigh  
Public Health  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

In a state with significant shortages in a variety of health care professions, El Paso is the least staffed large city in the United States. El Paso faces shortages in physicians, dentists, nurses, and allied health professionals. Furthermore, physicians are not evenly distributed throughout the state. In 2008, El Paso County had approximately 109 direct care physicians per 100,000 people, compared to almost 159 per 100,000 people statewide and 214 per 100,000 people nationwide.

In addition to the physician shortage, as a result of base realignment and closure in Texas, Fort Bliss will experience a large influx of troops and dependants over the next five years. Growth at Fort Bliss is estimated to be more than 65,000. At the hearing of the Senate Subcommittee on Base Realignment And Closure held in El Paso last year, William Beaumont Army Medical Center staff testified that base realignment and closure alone will require an additional 615 doctors by 2017. This legislation will help address the physician shortage issue by allowing qualified, out-of-state doctors to obtain Texas medical licenses.

S.B. 616 provides that the time frame to pass each part of the examination for a license to practice medicine and the limitation on examination attempts do not apply to an applicant who is licensed and in good standing as a physician in another state; has been licensed for at least five years; does not hold a medical license in the other state that has or has ever had any restrictions, disciplinary orders, or probation; and who will practice in a medically underserved area or a health manpower shortage area.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Medical Board in SECTIONS 1 and 2 of this bill.

### **ANALYSIS**

S.B. 616 amends the Occupations Code to establish that the time frame to pass each part of the examination for a license to practice medicine does not apply to an applicant who is licensed and in good standing as a physician in another state; has been licensed for at least five years; does not hold a medical license in the other state that has any or has ever had any restrictions, disciplinary orders, or probation; and will practice in a medically underserved area or a health manpower shortage area as defined in provisions of the Occupations Code relating to prescribing at sites serving certain medically underserved populations.

S.B. 616 authorizes the Texas Medical Board to establish by rule a process to verify that a person, after meeting the requirements relating to the timeframe to pass each part of the licensing examination, practices only in a medically underserved area or a health manpower shortage area.

S.B. 616 establishes that the limitation on examination attempts by an applicant for a license to practice medicine does not apply to an applicant who is licensed and in good standing as a physician in another state; has been licensed for at least five years; does not hold a medical license in the other state that has or has ever had any restrictions, disciplinary orders, or probation; and will practice in a medically underserved area or a health manpower shortage area as those terms are defined in provisions of the Occupations Code relating to prescribing at sites serving certain medically underserved populations.

S.B. 616 authorizes the Texas Medical Board to establish by rule a process to verify that a person who, after meeting the requirements relating to a limitation on medical license examination attempts, practices only in a medically underserved area or a health manpower shortage area.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage, or, if the act does not receive the necessary vote, the act takes effect September 1, 2009.