

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 879
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Health & Human Services
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

H.B. 879 seeks to address the challenge of integrating military veterans into the civilian healthcare workforce by creating a pathway for veterans with medical and nursing experience gained during their military service to obtain licenses to practice medicine or nursing in Texas. The bill directly addresses the shortage of healthcare professionals by leveraging the skills of military veterans who have already been trained in providing care to service members and veterans but face barriers when transitioning to civilian healthcare roles.

Currently, veterans with medical or nursing backgrounds obtained during their military service may face challenges when seeking licensure in the civilian workforce. These challenges include navigating complex licensure requirements that do not account for the unique nature of military training and experience. While existing law does provide some pathways for veterans to seek civilian certification, the process can be burdensome and may not adequately recognize the specialized skills and experience gained in the military context. As a result, qualified veterans may be unable to transition into civilian healthcare positions quickly, despite possessing valuable experience.

H.B. 879 creates a streamlined process that allows veterans to apply for licensure in Texas if they were licensed and in good standing in another state and have served as medical professionals during their military service. Veterans who meet specific criteria, such as leaving military service within the past year and passing the Texas medical or nursing jurisprudence examination, would be eligible to receive a license in Texas. The bill also ensures that individuals with a history of misconduct or felony convictions are excluded from receiving a license, ensuring public safety and maintaining high professional standards.

H.B. 879 amends current law relating to the licensing of certain military veterans as health care providers.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 155, Occupations Code, by adding Section 155.012, as follows:

Sec. 155.012. LICENSING OF CERTAIN MILITARY VETERANS. (a) Defines "active duty" and "armed forces of the United States."

(b) Requires the Texas Medical Board (TMB) to issue a license to practice medicine to an applicant who:

(1) is licensed in good standing as a physician in another state;

(2) is a veteran of the armed forces of the United States who retired from or otherwise left military service not more than one year before the application date for a license under this section;

(3) was, at the time of retiring from or leaving military service serving on active duty and authorized as a physician to treat persons enlisted in the armed forces of the United States or veterans;

(4) was honorably discharged from military service; and

(5) has passed the Texas medical jurisprudence examination.

(c) Prohibits TMB from issuing a license under this section to an applicant who:

(1) holds a medical license or a license to prescribe, dispense, administer, supply, or sell a controlled substance that is currently under active investigation or is or was subject to a disciplinary order or action or to denial by another jurisdiction; or

(2) has been convicted of, is on deferred adjudication community supervision or deferred disposition for, or is under active investigation for the commission of a felony or a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter D, Chapter 204, Occupations Code, by adding Section 204.159, as follows:

Sec. 204.159. LICENSING OF CERTAIN MILITARY VETERANS. (a) Defines "active duty" and "armed forces of the United States."

(b) Requires the physician assistant board (board) to issue a license to an applicant who:

(1) is licensed in good standing as a physician assistant in another state;

(2) is a veteran of the armed forces of the United States who retired from or otherwise left military service not more than one year before the application date for a license under this section;

(3) was, at the time of retiring from or otherwise leaving military service, serving on active duty and authorized as a physician assistant to treat persons enlisted in the armed forces of the United States or veterans;

(4) was honorably discharged from military service; and

(5) has passed the jurisprudence examination.

(c) Prohibits the board from issuing a license under this section to an applicant who:

(1) holds a physician assistant license or a license to prescribe, dispense, administer, supply, or sell a controlled substance that is currently under active investigation or is or was subject to a disciplinary order or action or to denial by another jurisdiction; or

(2) has been convicted of, is on deferred adjudication community supervision or deferred disposition for, or is under active investigation for the commission of a felony or a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude.

SECTION 3. Amends Subchapter F, Chapter 301, Occupations Code, by adding Section 301.262, as follows:

Sec. 301.262. LICENSING OF CERTAIN MILITARY VETERANS. (a) Defines "active duty" and "armed forces of the United States."

(b) Requires the Texas Board of Nursing (BON) to issue a license to practice nursing to an applicant who:

- (1) is licensed in good standing as a nurse in another state;
- (2) is a veteran of the armed forces of the United States who retired from or otherwise left military service not more than one year before the application date for a license under this section;
- (3) was, at the time of retiring from or leaving military service serving on active duty and authorized as a nurse to treat persons enlisted in the armed forces of the United States or veterans;
- (4) was honorably discharged from military service; and
- (5) has passed the jurisprudence examination.

(c) Prohibits BON from issuing a license under this section to an applicant who:

- (1) holds a nursing license or a license to prescribe, dispense, administer, supply, or sell a controlled substance that is currently under active investigation or is or was subject to a disciplinary order or action or to denial by another jurisdiction; or
- (2) has been convicted of, is on deferred adjudication community supervision or deferred disposition for, or is under active investigation for the commission of a felony or a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2025.