LEGAL UPDATES

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Mass Leads Act Creates New Pathway for Licensure of Internationally Trained Physicians

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On November 20, 2024, Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey signed the Mass Leads Act, an expansive economic development bill, into law. Section 226 of the act amends MGL c. 112 §9 to create a new pathway towards full medical licensure for internationally trained physicians with the goal of addressing primary care shortages in Massachusetts' underserved and rural communities.

Process towards full licensure

The act allows internationally trained physicians who are authorized to practice medicine in a country other than the United States to obtain a limited license permitting them to work in a "participating healthcare facility." Participating healthcare facilities include federally qualified health centers, community health centers, and hospitals or healthcare facilities that the Board of Registration in Medicine (BORIM) approves that are in a "physician shortage area."

This is the first step in obtaining full licensure by a pathway other than entering into a residency program at a U.S. hospital.

After one to two years working under the supervision of a participating healthcare facility, the physician will be eligible for a two-year restricted license permitting the physician to practice independently in a physician shortage area. The restricted license will permit the physician to practice in a primary care specialty, psychiatry, or other specialties approved by BORIM. After the successful completion of this stage, the physician is eligible for a full, unrestricted license to practice medicine in Massachusetts.

Requirements for supervising an internationally trained physician

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The first part of this pathway to licensure requires the physician to work with an eligible healthcare facility. The participating healthcare facility must, jointly with the physician, submit evidence to BORIM that the physician is eligible for the pathway. In addition, the participating healthcare facility must develop a program to mentor, assess, and evaluate the physician's medical practice and enter into a full-time employment relationship with the physician. Prior to the physician receiving the two-year restricted license, the participating healthcare facility must complete an assessment and evaluation of the physician.

What this means for you

These new provisions provide an opportunity for foreign-trained physicians to obtain full licensure without completing a second residency program in the United States and expands the pool of physicians available to practice in rural and underserved areas of Massachusetts.

BORIM will need to update its regulations and guidance to implement this new law. We will update this notice when BORIM releases its proposed amendments.

Contact us

If you have any questions about this development or other issues, contact Crystal Bloom, Rebecca Rodman, Taylor White, another member of our Massachusetts-based Healthcare team, or your local Husch Blackwell attorney.

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