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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR	Sens. Trujillo and Nava/Reps. Johnson and Anyanonu	LAST UPDATED	
		ORIGINAL DATE	02/17/2025
SHORT TITLE	Immigrant Health Care Workforce Development	BILL NUMBER	Senate Bill 172
		ANALYST	Rommel

APPROPRIATION* (dollars in thousands)

FY25	FY26	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
	\$1,500.0	Recurring	General Fund

Parentheses () indicate expenditure decreases.
 *Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Relates to House Bill 15

Sources of Information

LFC Files

Agency Analysis Received From
 Workforce Solutions Department (WSD)
 Health Care Authority (HCA)
 University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center (UNM-HSC)
 New Mexico Medical Board (NMMB)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Senate Bill 172

Senate Bill 172 (SB172) creates the Immigrant Health Care Workforce Development Act and appropriates \$1.5 million from the general fund to the Workforce Solutions Department (WSD) to implement and administer the provisions of the bill. The bill specifies the appropriation includes funding to hire 3 FTE and for providing program grants.

Sections 3 through 5 create a primary care physician readiness pathway for medical doctors who have completed a post-graduate training program in a country outside of the United States and Canada and have been licensed to practice medicine in a country other than the United States or Canada for at least three years. Physicians must be certified by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECMFG) and enter a residency in a primary care clinical readiness program to last no less than six months and not to exceed twelve months.

Section 6 establishes a primary care residency grant to assist placement of immigrant international medical graduates in residency positions.

Section 7 creates the immigrant health care workforce development fund as a nonreverting fund, and Section 8 establishes an advisory committee appointed by the secretary of WSD.

Section 10 amends 61-6-6 NMSA 1978, the Medical Practice Act, adding definitions of “qualified international medical graduate” and “underserved community.”

Section 11 adds a new subsection to 66-6-11 NMSA 1978 that allows the New Mexico Medical Board (NMMB) to issue to a qualified international medical graduate a provisional license to practice medicine valid for a period not to exceed two years. After two years under the provisional license, the board may issue an unrestricted license if all requirements are met. A qualified physician must have an offer of full-time employment in a New Mexico medical facility.

The effective date of this bill is July 1, 2025.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$1.5 million contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY26 shall revert to the general fund. WSD estimates that \$1.5 million would provide four years of full operations at full capacity.

NMMB notes that insufficient financial resources to support such additional licensing pathways may lead to rushed or incomplete licensure eligibility decisions, risking the admission of underqualified practitioners or delays in integrating internationally-trained physicians into the healthcare workforce.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Virtually all of New Mexico faces a shortage in primary care physicians. Currently there are roughly five primary care physicians per 10 thousand people in New Mexico. Assuming no redistribution of the current workforce, an additional 334 primary care physicians would be needed for all New Mexico counties to meet the national benchmark (8.5 per 10 thousand population).¹

Costs for medical licensing exams, Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) certification, and visa application fees are significant barriers for immigrant healthcare workers. SB172 provides for financial support, contingent on the availability of funds, including stipends and travel, test fees or preparation costs, and other costs or expenses identified as critical to participants' successful completion of the program. These costs appear to be distinct from the funding for residency grants specified in Section 6, where funds are directed to the sponsor healthcare facility.

SB172 does not consider the immigration status of potential recruits. University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center (UNM-HSC) currently works only with practitioners with J1 visas, which are sponsored by the ECFMG.

¹ 2024 New Mexico Healthcare Workforce Committee Report.
https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=nmhc_workforce

UNM-HSC notes the following regarding immigrant physician residencies:

There is no existing fast-track one-year training program for immigrants that can be utilized, and no Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education pathway to provide this experience. Additionally, residency programs are confined to the National Resident Matching Program requirements, limiting the selection of immigrant applicants.

NMMB notes the following:

NMMB acknowledges there may be difficulty ensuring the postgraduate training is equivalent to the rigorous U.S. standards. Legislation and/or medical board regulations in other states enacting similar legislation only allow applicants with postgraduate training from specific countries.

The NMMB must preserve the authority to assess each candidate for full and unrestricted licensure; additional requirements to confirm successfully completed training may be implemented to ensure licensees are able to provide safe and effective patient care. Rules will be promulgated by the NMMB evaluating licensees following completion of these programs and pathways.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

SB172 relates to House Bill 15 (HB15), which would create a healthcare strategic recruitment program to address healthcare shortage areas. HB15 seeks to recruit persons who have graduated within the last 10 years from a New Mexico public postsecondary educational institution in a degree- or certificate-granting educational program in a healthcare shortage field but are not currently working in healthcare in the state.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

WSD provided the following statistics:

- As of 2023, 20 percent of active physicians in New Mexico completed their medical education outside the United States or Canada, including 29 percent of internal medicine physicians and 19 percent of family medicine physicians, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges.
- Nearly 10 percent of registered nurses in New Mexico are immigrants, according to the American Immigration Council.
- In 2024, 24 percent of all medical school graduates who matched into a residency program in New Mexico completed their medical education abroad, including 28.9 percent of residents matching into primary care specialties.

HR/rl/hg