**South Carolina General Assembly**

126th Session, 2025-2026

**S. 376**

**STATUS INFORMATION**

General Bill

Sponsors: Senator Davis

Document Path: LC-0278WAB25.docx

Introduced in the Senate on February 25, 2025

Currently residing in the Senate Committee on **Medical Affairs**

Summary: Expanding Physician Access Act of 2025

**HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS**

 Date Body Action Description with journal page number

 2/25/2025 Senate Introduced and read first time (Senate Journal‑page 5)

 2/25/2025 Senate Referred to Committee on **Medical Affairs** (Senate Journal‑page 5)

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**VERSIONS OF THIS BILL**

[02/25/2025](https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess126_2025-2026/prever/376_20250225.docx)

A bill

TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS by ENACTing THE “EXPANDING PHYSICIAN ACCESS ACT OF 2025” AND BY ADDING SECTION 40‑47‑39 SO AS TO REMOVE BARRIERS THAT PREVENT HIGH‑QUALITY, INTERNATIONALLY LICENSED PHYSICIANS FROM FILLING VACANCIES IN THIS STATE BY ELIMINATING UNNECESSARY TRAINING DUPLICATION WHILE MAINTAINING CARE STANDARDS AND OTHER LICENSURE AND PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS, TO EMPOWER THE STATE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS TO CONTINUE PERFORMING ITS ROLE TO ENSURE ALL INTERNATIONALLY LICENSED PHYSICIAN APPLICANTS HAVE THE REQUISITE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE TO PRACTICE MEDICINE IN THIS STATE, TO PROVIDE NECESSARY DEFINITIONS, TO PROVIDE REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES RELATED TO THE ISSUANCE AND REVOCATION OF PROVISIONAL LICENSES AND REGULAR LICENSES TO INTERNATIONAL PHYSICIANS SPONSORED BY HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS AND CERTAIN OTHER INTERNATIONAL PHYSICIANS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. This act may be cited as the “Expanding Physician Access Act of 2025.”

SECTION 2. Article 1, Chapter 47, Title 40 of the S.C. Code is amended by adding:

 Section 40‑47‑39. (A) The purpose of this section is to remove barriers that prevent high‑quality, internationally licensed physicians from filling vacancies in this State, including in rural and primary care settings, by eliminating unnecessary training duplication. All other care standards and requirements remain unchanged and the State Board of Medical Examiners is empowered to continue to perform its role to ensure all internationally licensed applicants have the requisite knowledge and experience to practice medicine in this State.

 (B) As used in this section:

 (1) “State Board of Medical Examiners” or “board” means the board established in Article 1 to regulate the medical profession.

 (2) “Physician” means any individual who has obtained a medical doctorate or substantially similar degree and is licensed inside or outside the United States.

 (3) “International physician” means an individual who:

 (a) has been granted a medical doctorate or substantially similar degree by a medical school recognized by the American Medical Association or its extant accreditation program for medical education, or a successor program of good standing;

 (b) has been in good standing with the medical licensing or regulatory institution of his licensing country within the last five years and does not have any pending disciplinary action before the licensing body;

 (c) has completed a residency or substantially similar post‑graduate medical training or has practiced as a medical professional performing the duties of a physician in his licensing country at least seven years after the completion of a medical doctorate;

 (d) has practiced medicine as a fully licensed physician in his licensing country for at least five years after the completion of residency training or residency equivalent as defined in subitem (c); and

 (e) possesses basic fluency in the English language.

 (4) “Healthcare provider” means an individual, entity, corporation, person, or organization, whether for profit or nonprofit, that furnishes, bills, or is paid for healthcare procedures or service delivery in the normal course of business, and includes, without limitation, health systems, hospitals, hospital‑based facilities, freestanding emergency facilities, and urgent care clinics.

 (C) State License for Healthcare Provider‑Sponsored International Physicians:

 (1) The board shall grant a provisional license to practice medicine in this State to any international physician with an offer for employment as a physician at any healthcare provider that operates in the State.

 (a) The board may not grant a provisional license to practice medicine in this State to any international physician unless he is eligible to obtain federal immigration status that allows him to practice as a physician in the United States.

 (b) The board may not grant a provisional license to practice medicine in this State to any international physician unless he possesses a passing score on steps 1, 2, and 3 of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE).

 (c) The board may revoke a provisional license granted under item (1) if the international physician is not employed by a healthcare provider that operates in the State during the provisional license period.

 (2) The board may revoke a provisional license granted under item (1) based on clear and convincing evidence that medical services provided by the licensee have violated state medical safety, competency, or conduct standards.

 (a) Licensees may appeal the revocation of their provisional license to the administrative law court within one‑hundred twenty days after the revocation of a provisional license.

 (b) The court shall reinstate the provisional license if it finds that the Board’s actions did not meet the standards in this item.

 (3) Provisional licenses automatically are converted into full licenses to practice medicine in this State after three years of active practice in this State.

 (4) Nothing in this subsection requires the board to license, on a provisional or full basis, an international physician without evidence of equivalent training, without evidence of satisfactory passage of exams, without satisfactory results of a background investigation, without the completion of the license application, and without payment of all required fees.

 (5) International physicians must obtain federal work authorization before commencing any work for the sponsoring healthcare provider.

 (6) International physicians who become licensed under item (3) need not maintain employment with the original sponsoring facility at the conclusion of the provisional licensing period.

 (D) State License for Certain International Physicians:

 (1) The board shall grant a provisional license to practice medicine in this State to any applicant international physician who is a resident of and licensed to practice in any of the following countries:

 (a) Australia;

 (b) Ireland;

 (c) Israel;

 (d) New Zealand;

 (e) Singapore;

 (f) South Africa;

 (g) Switzerland;

 (h) the United Kingdom; and

 (i) Canada.

 (2) Additional countries may be added to item (1) by the board.

 (3) The board only may grant a license under item (1) to an international physician who is eligible to obtain federal immigration status that allows him to practice as a physician in the United States.

 (4) The board may revoke a provisional license granted under item (1) based on clear and convincing evidence that medical services provided by the licensee have violated state medical safety, competency, or conduct standards.

 (a) Licensees may appeal the revocation of their provisional license to the administrative law court within one hundred twenty days of the revocation of their provisional license.

 (b) The court shall reinstate the provisional license if it finds that the board’s actions did not meet the standards in this item.

 (5) Provisional licenses automatically are converted into full licenses to practice medicine in this State after three years of active practice in this State.

 (6) Nothing in this subsection requires the board to license, on a provisional or full basis, an international physician without evidence of equivalent training, without evidence of satisfactory passage of exams, without satisfactory results of a background investigation, without the completion of the license application, and without payment of all required fees.

SECTION 3. If any section, subsection, paragraph, subparagraph, sentence, clause, phrase, or word of this act is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such holding shall not affect the constitutionality or validity of the remaining portions of this act, the General Assembly hereby declaring that it would have passed this act, and each and every section, subsection, paragraph, subparagraph, sentence, clause, phrase, and word thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more other sections, subsections, paragraphs, subparagraphs, sentences, clauses, phrases, or words hereof may be declared to be unconstitutional, invalid, or otherwise ineffective.

SECTION 4. This act takes effect on January 1, 2026.

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