

Foreign Trained Health Professional Licensing Project Report

New Mainers Resource Center
Portland Adult Education

January 21, 2021

Presentation Innovation, Development,
Economic Advancement and Business
Committee



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Who We Are

The New Mainers Resource Center (NMRC) was created in 2013 by the Maine State Legislature to develop and execute a strategy to integrate and better utilize the skills of foreign trained immigrants living in Maine. Established as a pilot project at Portland Adult Education (PAE), NMRC's mission is to support Maine's economic development by meeting employers' demands for a skilled and culturally diverse workforce.

Support for this project was provided by

MeHAF MAINE HEALTH ACCESS FOUNDATION

Reducing Barriers to support Maine's Health Workforce

The purpose of this project is to increase diversity and cultural competence of the health workforce by identifying strategies to reduce the barriers that foreign trained health professionals face in accessing training, licensing, and obtaining employment in the healthcare field at the fullest scope of their experience and training as possible.

Implementation of the recommendations from this research will:

- **Help foreign trained healthcare workers work toward reaching their highest potential**
- **Address the state's goal of a diversified and culturally competent workforce**
- **Meet the needs of employers, address the state's health workforce shortage**
- **Attract highly skilled healthcare workers to Maine**

The Problem

An estimated 263,000 immigrants and refugees with at least a four-year degree in a health field have largely been sidelined, either employed in jobs that require no more than a high school diploma or are out of work.

Most foreign trained physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and others, are not able to practice in Maine.

Barriers are currently too great for most to overcome.

We can begin addressing this in 2021 with workforce funding

Maine's current shortage of 600 RNs is expected to balloon to a 3,200 nurse shortfall by 2025.

Maine Department of Labor anticipates a need for at least 3,700 more workers in ambulatory health care services, 2,300 more in hospitals and 1,900 more in nursing and residential care facilities over the 10-year period ending in 2024.

The Problem: Health Outcome Disparities and Workforce Shortages

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness



‘I’m scared’
Black people — many of them immigrants — make up less than 2 percent of Maine’s population but almost a quarter of its coronavirus cases

Hospitals competing for nurses as US coronavirus cases surge

By TAMMY WEBBER November 2, 2020



FENTON, Michigan (AP) — As the coronavirus pandemic surges across the nation and infections and hospitalizations rise, medical administrators are scrambling to find enough nursing help — especially in rural areas and at small hospitals.

Background: Many state-wide stakeholders have recognized this problem

The New Mainers Resource Center (NMRC) was created in 2013 by the Maine State Legislature

2018 Maine's Hidden Talent Pool Report

2019 Resolve, Directing the Commissioner of Professional Financial Regulation To Create a Working Group To Study Barriers to Credentialing and 2020 Report

2020 - Supporting Maine's Foreign Trained Professionals - Report to the Governor's Office of Policy, Innovation, and the Future

Pilot Project and Process

Areas Identified for Research

1. Removing barriers and expanding access for at least three professions
2. Possibilities for mid-level health professionals
3. Removing overall barriers to licensing for foreign trained health professionals
4. Continue to provide advice, case management, and support to foreign-trained health professionals

Process

Survey, Meetings, and Interviews with new Mainer foreign trained health professionals

Experience working with new Mainers pursuing professional careers and collaborations with immigrant groups and other organizations

Input from Maine employers, colleges and universities, licensing boards other stakeholders

Research of national programs, employers, initiatives and legislation that address barriers

Major Finding: Barriers in Every Sector Prevent a Return to Practice

- Individuals licensed to practice in foreign countries are not able to achieve licensing in Maine
- Most are unable to work on licensing issues because they must secure basic needs
- Colleges, universities are not offering meaningful advanced standing
- Many who are required to start their education over cannot qualify for financial support due to their status as asylum seekers or they already have a college degree
- English proficiency
- Many receive inaccurate information about the process
- Employer assistance programs often do not fit their circumstances
- Many individual's immigration status prohibit participation in workforce programs
- Mid-level healthcare positions, utilizing professionals' skills, do not exist in Maine

Recommendations

A female healthcare professional, likely a nurse or doctor, is shown from the chest up. She is wearing a light blue surgical cap and clear safety glasses. Her attire consists of blue scrubs. She is holding a red stethoscope around her neck, with the chest piece resting on her chest. The background is a solid, vibrant blue.

Based on our findings, we have proposed modifications in each sector that, if enacted, would assist many health professionals to practice at or near their scope of practice again.

Colleges

Must offer substantial advanced standing, more options for transcript evaluators

Employers

Modify tuition plans, high level jobs utilizing skill levels, provide internships, and other career advancement support

Licensing

Offer more choices in credential evaluators, provide links to support and information for applicants

State Policy

DOL, DHHS, FAME modify criteria in workforce programs through legislation, rule and policy change

NMRC

Expanded healthcare division with high-level English classes and support to address provider workforce shortage

Recommendations within IDEA Committee Jurisdiction

LICENSING

Support LD 149 – An Act to Facilitate Licensure for Credentialed Individuals from Other Jurisdictions. This comprehensive Legislation from DPFR is based on the OPOR Working Group 2020 Report to IDEA.

Examples of other bills that impact those with foreign licenses

LD 31 Occupational Therapist Compact Act

LD 11 An Act To Clarify the Laws Regarding Reciprocity for Licensure of Professional Engineers

Recommendations IDEA Committee Jurisdiction

- FINANCE AUTHORITY OF MAINE

Consider a Resolve to create a working group with the assistance of FAME to review programs such as *Maine Medical Loans*, *Doctors for Maine's Future*, *Maine Health Professionals Loan*, in order to support healthcare providers and high-skilled professionals with foreign credentials.

- Consider legislation to require licensing bodies outside of OPOR to analyze their licensing procedures for barriers for credentialed individuals from other jurisdictions
- Expanded capacity at NMRC to put more high-skilled healthcare providers to work statewide

Portland Adult Education: A Coordinated Healthcare Sector Focused Program

To better serve both new Mainer health
professionals and health employers

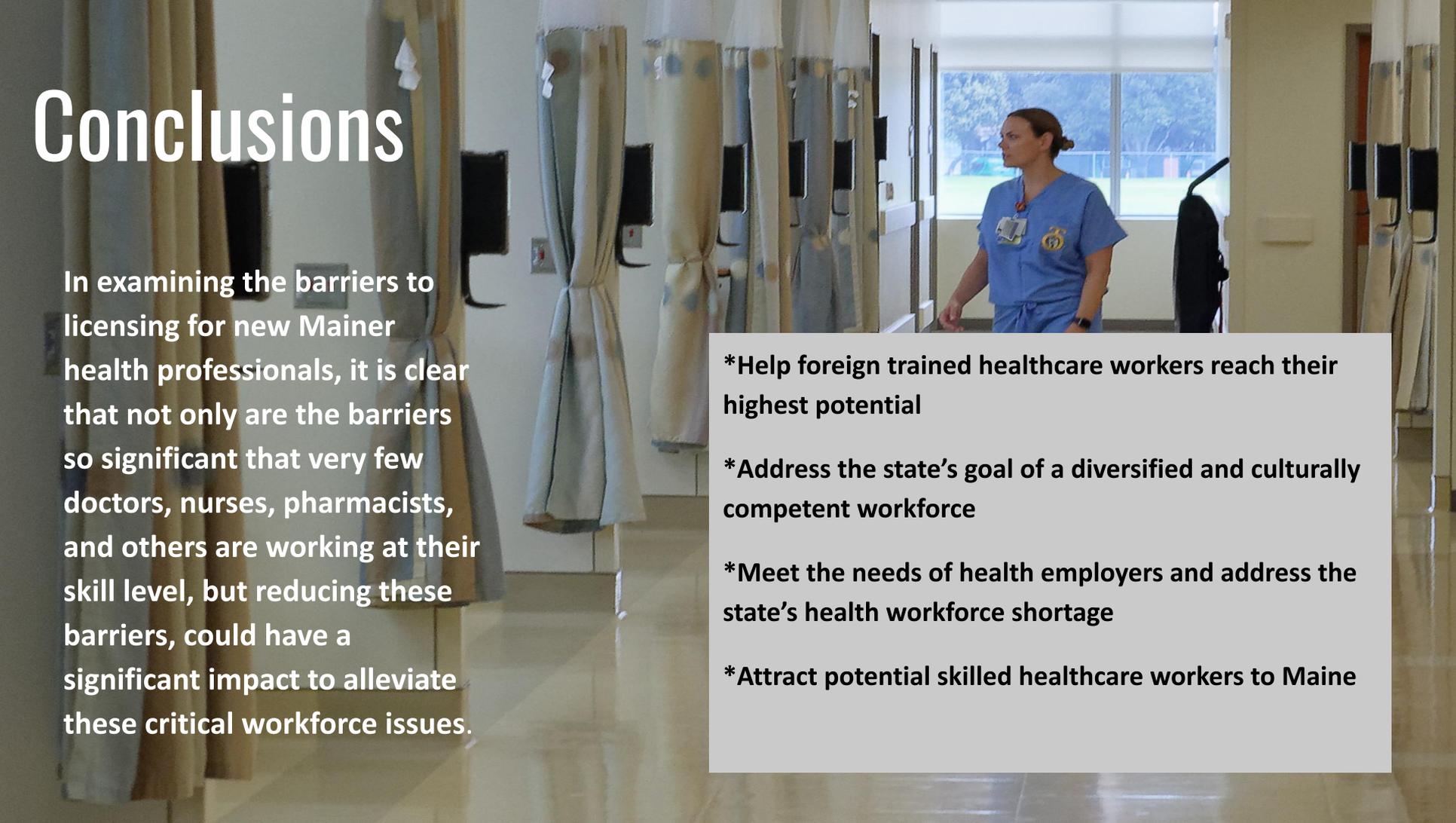
VISION: PAE will provide the guidance, support, training, and opportunities necessary to help any immigrant or refugee who has previously been a healthcare professional, or who wants a career in the healthcare field, to reach their fullest potential.

With expanded funding for our healthcare workforce programming, we can immediately address this issue on a larger scale.

Work with stakeholders on the implementation of the recommendations of this report, advocate to meet the needs of specific individuals as they move forward on their career paths and offer technical assistance and support to other service providers and individuals statewide.

Work closely with OPOR staff and boards to address any barriers and facilitate licensing for foreign trained health professionals.

Conclusions

A photograph of a hospital hallway. A nurse in blue scrubs is standing in the middle ground, looking towards the right. The hallway is lined with light-colored curtains on the left and a window on the right. The floor is polished and reflects the light.

In examining the barriers to licensing for new Mainer health professionals, it is clear that not only are the barriers so significant that very few doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and others are working at their skill level, but reducing these barriers, could have a significant impact to alleviate these critical workforce issues.

- *Help foreign trained healthcare workers reach their highest potential**
- *Address the state's goal of a diversified and culturally competent workforce**
- *Meet the needs of health employers and address the state's health workforce shortage**
- *Attract potential skilled healthcare workers to Maine**

Next Steps

Pass LD 149 – An Act to Facilitate Licensure for Credentialed Individuals from Other Jurisdictions

Consider Resolve to Explore FAME programs

Consider other legislative ways to expand licensure

Expand capacity at NMRC

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For copies of the report go to:

[*Foreign Trained Health Professional Licensing
Pilot Project*](#)

