

LD 2268

An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission Regarding Foreign-trained Physicians Living in Maine to Establish a Sponsorship Program for International Medical Graduates

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee, My name is Abigail Beal of Cherryfield, Maine, and I am here in opposition to LD 2268.

I have a number of concerns with this bill but want to bring up two points here today.

1. First, the commission report says: *“It is well documented that Maine and states across the nation are experiencing significant health care workforce shortages. ...The pandemic exacerbated the problem....The health care workforce shrank during the pandemic, leaving fewer health care professionals to see an increasing number of patients.”*

The shortage of health care workers in the state is a problem largely created by and substantially exacerbated by the State.

In 2021 the Office of Governor Janet Mills in conjunction with The Maine DHHS and CDC proudly made Maine, *“one of the most aggressive states in the nation in requiring vaccination of health care workers, both in terms of the scope of health care workers and timeframe for vaccination.”*¹

The mandate required full vaccination of all employees as a condition of health care facilities' licensure. The Governor's statement continued, saying that, *“According to a mandated survey of health care settings by the Department of Health and Human Services, 80.3 percent of staff at hospitals, 73 percent of staff at nursing facilities, and 68.2 percent of staff at intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19.”*

In other words, the State intentionally targeted 19.7% of staff members at hospitals, 27% at nursing homes, and 31.8% at long-term disability facilities. That means that on average, this mandate affected 26.2% of health care workers in these facilities. **That's roughly 25 of every 100 workers at hospitals, nursing homes, and disability facilities who suddenly were forced to decide whether to take the jobs or lose their jobs.**

That clearly put Maine families at risk. Obviously, not everyone wanted the experimental Covid vaccination and all the subsequent boosters. But this mandate caused Maine health care workers and families to be marginalized and forced out of their jobs for no other reason than not wanting to become glorified lab rats.

Given the above-listed survey results, our government knew that such a mandate would affect a large percentage of Maine's health care workers, and they did it anyway. And even this commission report acknowledges the significant losses that occurred specifically in relation to the Covid mess.

But it gets even better. Not only did the government force citizens out of their jobs....

2. This bill now proposes to try to 'fix' the health care crisis by helping illegals gain quicker entrance into the profession here.

The stated focus of the Commission Regarding Foreign-trained Physicians Living in Maine was “to study integrating foreign-trained physicians, including physicians who identify as surgeons, living in the State into the health care workforce ... **with a focus on those who are here as refugees and asylum seekers,** and reducing barriers to licensing for foreign-trained physicians and physicians from other states.” (emphasis added)

The commission report goes on to sympathize with asylum seekers ², listing responsibilities, disadvantages, and hardships faced by illegals and seeking to give them a big hand up.

But what about all the already-licensed and legal health care workers who lost their jobs to the Covid mandates? What about the doctors who had their licenses jeopardized or revoked for daring to treat patients with proven-to-be safe and effective treatments for Covid-19? Is there any empathy or consideration for them?!

Instead of respecting Maine's hard-working population, the state destroyed the health care system by ousting hard-working citizens and now proposes to replace them with illegals. And then adds insult to injury by using public tax money to do it. That's what this piece of legislation effectively does, and it is clear that this entire situation is fundamentally anti-Mainers and pro-illegals.

It is for these and other reasons that I ask you to oppose this piece of legislation. Thank you for your time.

¹ Mills Administration Requires Health Care Workers To Be Fully Vaccinated Against COVID-19 By October 1
<https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/mills-administration-requires-health-care-workers-be-fully-vaccinated-against-covid-19-october>

² From page 14 of the Commission Regarding Foreign-trained Physicians Living in Maine January 2024 : <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/10599>

“One of the primary barriers for IMGs is **lack of access to financial resources for expenses related to schooling or licensing itself.** Costs related to obtaining school transcripts and diplomas, test application fees, and test preparation materials and courses can range from \$10,000 to \$15,000.9 In most cases, IMGs who come to the U.S. **need to work to meet basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, child care and health care)** for themselves and their families. **Working to meet these basic needs means that the IMG has less time and financial resources to study English, prepare for tests and obtain clinical experience. Asylum seekers are eligible for food stamps, Medicare and cash assistance. Asylum seekers are also eligible for work permits once they have completed the waiting period after filing asylum applications. However, asylum seekers are not eligible for most medical residency programs until they obtain lawful permanent status.** Because of backlogs in the U.S. immigration system, the waiting period to receive permanent status can be five to ten years. **In addition to supporting a family in the U.S., refugees and asylum seekers may also provide support to families back in their home country.**” (emphasis added)