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HOUSE BILL NO. 694

Originated in House Don Richardson Clerk

HOUSE BILL NO. 694

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTIONS 73-15-19 AND 73-15-21, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REQUIRE APPLICANTS FOR LICENSURE AS A REGISTERED NURSE OR LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSE TO UNDERGO A FINGERPRINT-BASED CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECK; TO AMEND SECTION 73-15-17, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO AUTHORIZE THE BOARD OF NURSING, UPON REASONABLE SUSPICION THAT A LICENSEE HAS VIOLATED ANY STATUTORY GROUND FOR DENIAL OF LICENSURE OR IS GUILTY OF ANY OF CERTAIN OFFENSES, TO REQUIRE THE LICENSEE TO UNDERGO A FINGERPRINT-BASED CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORDS CHECK IN THE SAME MANNER AS REQUIRED FOR APPLICANTS FOR LICENSURE; TO AMEND SECTION 73-15-25, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO CLARIFY THE AUTHORITY OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO CONTRACT WITH THE STATE BOARD FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES RELATIVE TO THE PROGRAMS OF SCHOOLS OF PRACTICAL NURSING; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. Section 73-15-19, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

73-15-19. (1) **Registered nurse applicant qualifications.**
Any applicant for a license to practice as a registered nurse shall submit to the board:

(a) An attested written application on a Board of Nursing form;

(b) Written official evidence of completion of a nursing program approved by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, or one approved by a legal accrediting agency of another state, territory or possession of the United States, the District of Columbia, or a foreign country which is satisfactory to this board;

(c) Evidence of competence in English related to nursing, provided the first language is not English;

(d) Any other official records required by the board.

In addition to the requirements specified in paragraphs (a) through (d) of this subsection, in order to qualify for a license to practice as a registered nurse, an applicant must have successfully been cleared for licensure through an investigation that shall consist of a determination as to good moral character and verification that the prospective licensee is not guilty of or in violation of any statutory ground for denial of licensure as set forth in Section 73-15-29 or guilty of any offense specified in Section 73-15-33. To assist the board in conducting its licensure investigation, all applicants shall undergo a fingerprint-based criminal history records check of the Mississippi central criminal database and the Federal Bureau of Investigation criminal history database. Each applicant shall submit a full set of his or her fingerprints in a form and manner prescribed by the board, which shall be forwarded to the Mississippi Department of Public Safety (department) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation Identification Division for this purpose.

Any and all state or national criminal history records information obtained by the board that is not already a matter of public record shall be deemed nonpublic and confidential information restricted to the exclusive use of the board, its members, officers, investigators, agents and attorneys in evaluating the applicant's eligibility or disqualification for licensure, and shall be exempt from the Mississippi Public Records Act of 1983. Except when introduced into evidence in a hearing before the board to determine licensure, no such information or records related thereto shall, except with the written consent of the applicant or by order of a court of competent jurisdiction, be released or otherwise disclosed by the board to any other person or agency.

The board shall provide to the department the fingerprints of the applicant, any additional information that may be required by

the department, and a form signed by the applicant consenting to the check of the criminal records and to the use of the fingerprints and other identifying information required by the state or national repositories.

The board shall charge and collect from the applicant, in addition to all other applicable fees and costs, such amount as may be incurred by the board in requesting and obtaining state and national criminal history records information on the applicant.

The board may, in its discretion, refuse to accept the application of any person who has been convicted of a criminal offense under any provision of Title 97 of the Mississippi Code of 1972, as now or hereafter amended, or any provision of this article.

(2) **Licensure by examination.** (a) Upon the board being satisfied that an applicant for a license as a registered nurse has met the qualifications set forth in subsection (1) of this section, the board shall proceed to examine such applicant in such subjects as the board shall, in its discretion, determine. The subjects in which applicants shall be examined shall be in conformity with curricula in schools of nursing approved by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, or one approved by a legal accrediting agency of another state, territory or possession of the United States, the District of Columbia, or a foreign country which is satisfactory to the board.

(b) The applicant shall be required to pass the written examination as selected by the board.

(c) Upon successful completion of such examination, the board shall issue to the applicant a license to practice as a registered nurse.

(d) The board may use any part or all of the state board test pool examination for registered nurse licensure, its successor examination, or any other nationally standardized

examination identified by the board in its rules. The passing score shall be established by the board in its rules.

(3) **Licensure by endorsement.** The board may issue a license to practice nursing as a registered nurse without examination to an applicant who has been duly licensed as a registered nurse under the laws of another state, territory or possession of the United States, the District of Columbia, or a foreign country if, in the opinion of the board, the applicant meets the qualifications required of licensed registered nurses in this state and has previously achieved the passing score or scores on the licensing examination required by this state, at the time of his or her graduation.

(4) **Requirements for rewriting the examination.** The board shall establish in its rules the requirements for rewriting the examination for those persons failing the examination on the first writing or subsequent rewriting.

(5) **Fee.** The applicant applying for a license by examination or by endorsement to practice as a registered nurse shall pay a fee not to exceed One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) to the board.

(6) **Temporary permit.** (a) The board may issue a temporary permit to practice nursing to a graduate of an approved school of nursing pending the results of the examination in Mississippi, and to a qualified applicant from another state, territory or possession of the United States, or District of Columbia, or pending licensure procedures as provided for elsewhere in this article. The fee shall not exceed Twenty-five Dollars (\$25.00).

(b) The board may issue a temporary permit for a period of ninety (90) days to a registered nurse who is currently licensed in another state, territory or possession of the United States or the District of Columbia and who is an applicant for licensure by endorsement. Such permit is not renewable except by board action.

(c) The board may issue a temporary permit to a graduate of an approved school of nursing pending the results of the first licensing examination scheduled after application. Such permit is not renewable except by board action.

(d) The board may issue a temporary permit for a period of thirty (30) days to any registered nurse during the time enrolled in a nursing reorientation program. This time period may be extended by board action. The fee shall not exceed Twenty-five Dollars (\$25.00).

(e) The board may adopt such regulations as are necessary to limit the practice of persons to whom temporary permits are issued.

(7) **Temporary license.** The board may issue a temporary license to practice nursing at a youth camp licensed by the State Board of Health to nonresident registered nurses and retired resident registered nurses under the provisions of Section 75-74-8.

(8) **Title and abbreviation.** Any person who holds a license or holds the privilege to practice as a registered nurse in this state shall have the right to use the title "registered nurse" and the abbreviation "R.N." No other person shall assume such title or use such abbreviation, or any words, letters, signs or devices to indicate that the person using the same is a registered nurse.

(9) **Registered nurses licensed under a previous law.** Any person holding a license to practice nursing as a registered nurse issued by this board which is valid on July 1, 1981, shall thereafter be deemed to be licensed as a registered nurse under the provisions of this article upon payment of the fee provided in Section 73-15-27.

(10) Each application or filing made under this section shall include the social security number(s) of the applicant in accordance with Section 93-11-64.

SECTION 2. Section 73-15-21, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

73-15-21. (1) **Licensed practical nurse applicant**

qualifications. Any applicant for a license to practice practical nursing as a licensed practical nurse shall submit to the board:

- (a) An attested written application on a Board of Nursing form;
- (b) A diploma from an approved high school or the equivalent thereof, as determined by the appropriate educational agency;
- (c) Written official evidence of completion of a practical nursing program approved by the State Department of Education through its Division of Vocational Education, or one approved by a legal accrediting agency of another state, territory or possession of the United States, the District of Columbia, or a foreign country which is satisfactory to this board;
- (d) Evidence of competence in English related to nursing, provided the first language is not English;
- (e) Any other official records required by the board.

In addition to the requirements specified in paragraphs (a) through (e) of this subsection, in order to qualify for a license to practice practical nursing as a licensed practical nurse, an applicant must have successfully been cleared for licensure through an investigation that shall consist of a determination as to good moral character and verification that the prospective licensee is not guilty of or in violation of any statutory ground for denial of licensure as set forth in Section 73-15-29 or guilty of any offense specified in Section 73-15-33. To assist the board in conducting its licensure investigation, all applicants shall undergo a fingerprint-based criminal history records check of the Mississippi central criminal database and the Federal Bureau of Investigation criminal history database. Each applicant shall submit a full set of his or her fingerprints in a form and manner

prescribed by the board, which shall be forwarded to the Mississippi Department of Public Safety (department) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation Identification Division for this purpose.

Any and all state or national criminal history records information obtained by the board that is not already a matter of public record shall be deemed nonpublic and confidential information restricted to the exclusive use of the board, its members, officers, investigators, agents and attorneys in evaluating the applicant's eligibility or disqualification for licensure, and shall be exempt from the Mississippi Public Records Act of 1983. Except when introduced into evidence in a hearing before the board to determine licensure, no such information or records related thereto shall, except with the written consent of the applicant or by order of a court of competent jurisdiction, be released or otherwise disclosed by the board to any other person or agency.

The board shall provide to the department the fingerprints of the applicant, any additional information that may be required by the department, and a form signed by the applicant consenting to the check of the criminal records and to the use of the fingerprints and other identifying information required by the state or national repositories.

The board shall charge and collect from the applicant, in addition to all other applicable fees and costs, such amount as may be incurred by the board in requesting and obtaining state and national criminal history records information on the applicant.

The board may, in its discretion, refuse to accept the application of any person who has been convicted of a criminal offense under any provision of Title 97 of the Mississippi Code of 1972, as now or hereafter amended, or any provision of this article.

(2) **Licensure by examination.** (a) Upon the board being satisfied that an applicant for a license as a practical nurse has met the qualifications set forth in subsection (1) of this section, the board shall proceed to examine such applicant in such subjects as the board shall, in its discretion, determine. The subjects in which applicants shall be examined shall be in conformity with curricula in schools of practical nursing approved by the State Department of Education.

(b) The applicant shall be required to pass the written examination selected by the board.

(c) Upon successful completion of such examination, the board shall issue to the applicant a license to practice as a licensed practical nurse.

(d) The board may use any part or all of the state board test pool examination for practical nurse licensure, its successor examination, or any other nationally standardized examination identified by the board in its rules. The passing score shall be established by the board in its rules.

(3) **Licensure by endorsement.** The board may issue a license to practice practical nursing as a licensed practical nurse without examination to an applicant who has been duly licensed as a licensed practical nurse under the laws of another state, territory or possession of the United States, the District of Columbia, or a foreign country if, in the opinion of the board, the applicant meets the qualifications required of licensed practical nurses in this state and has previously achieved the passing score or scores on the licensing examination required by this state at the time of his or her graduation.

(4) **Licensure by equivalent amount of theory and clinical experience.** In the discretion of the board, former students of a state accredited school preparing students to become registered nurses may be granted permission to take the examination for licensure to practice as a licensed practical nurse, provided the

applicant's record or transcript indicates the former student completed an equivalent amount of theory and clinical experiences as required of a graduate of a practical nursing program, and provided the school attended was, at the time of the student's attendance, an accredited school of nursing.

(5) **Requirements for rewriting the examination.** The board shall establish in its rules the requirements for rewriting the examination for those persons failing the examination on the first writing or subsequent writing.

(6) **Fee.** The applicant applying for a license by examination or by endorsement to practice as a licensed practical nurse shall pay a fee not to exceed Sixty Dollars (\$60.00) to the board.

(7) **Temporary permit.** (a) The board may issue a temporary permit to practice practical nursing to a graduate of an approved school of practical nursing pending the results of the examination in Mississippi, and to a qualified applicant from another state, territory or possession of the United States, or the District of Columbia, pending licensing procedures as provided for elsewhere in this article. The fee shall not exceed Twenty-five Dollars (\$25.00).

(b) The board may issue a temporary permit for a period of ninety (90) days to a licensed practical nurse who is currently licensed in another state, territory or possession of the United States or the District of Columbia and who is an applicant for licensure by endorsement. Such permit is not renewable except by board action.

(c) The board may issue a temporary permit to a graduate of an approved practical nursing education program or an equivalent program satisfactory to the board pending the results of the first licensing examination scheduled after application. Such permit is not renewable except by board action.

(d) The board may issue a temporary permit for a period of thirty (30) days to any licensed practical nurse during the time enrolled in a nursing reorientation program. This time period may be extended by board action. The fee shall not exceed Twenty-five Dollars (\$25.00).

(e) The board may adopt such regulations as are necessary to limit the practice of persons to whom temporary permits are issued.

(8) **Title and abbreviation.** Any person who holds a license or holds the privilege to practice as a licensed practical nurse in this state shall have the right to use the title "licensed practical nurse" and the abbreviation "L P.N." No other person shall assume such title or use such abbreviation, or any words, letters, signs or devices to indicate that a person using the same is a licensed practical nurse

(9) **Licensed practical nurses licensed under a previous law.** Any person holding a license to practice nursing as a practical nurse issued by this board which is valid on July 1, 1981, shall thereafter be deemed to be licensed as a practical nurse under the provisions of this article upon payment of the fee prescribed in Section 73-15-27.

(10) Each application or filing made under this section shall include the social security number(s) of the applicant in accordance with Section 93-11-54

SECTION 3. Section 73-15-17, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

73-15-17. The Mississippi Board of Nursing is authorized and empowered to:

(a) Adopt and from time to time revise such rules and regulations consistent with the law as shall be necessary to govern its proceedings and carry into effect the provisions of this article.

(b) Require the secretary to keep records of all meetings of the board and keep a record of all proceedings, and to prepare a register of registered nurses and a register of licensed practical nurses, all nurses appearing thereon to be duly licensed under this article, and which registers shall be open for public inspection at all reasonable times.

(c) Issue subpoenas, require attendance of witnesses, and administer oaths of persons giving testimony.

(d) Cause the prosecution of all persons violating the provisions of this article, and incur such necessary expenses therefor.

(e) Conduct hearings upon charges calling for discipline of a licensee or revocation of a license or of the privilege to practice.

(f) Present a true and full report to the Governor and the Legislature, together with statement of receipts and disbursements on or before February 1 of each year.

(g) Maintain an office in the greater Jackson area for the administration of this article.

(h) File an annual list of all certificates of registration issued by the board with the Secretary of State's office for both registered nurses and licensed practical nurses.

(i) File an annual list of all certificates of registration issued by the board to registered nurses, including addresses of the persons with the Mississippi Nurses' Association; and file a similar list of all certificates of registration issued to licensed practical nurses, including addresses of the persons, with the Mississippi Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses and the Mississippi Licensed Practical Nurses Association.

(j) Adopt a seal which shall be in the form of a circle with the image of an eagle in the center, and around the margin the words "Mississippi Board of Nursing," and under the image of the eagle the word "Official." The seal shall be affixed to

certificates and warrants issued by the board, and to all records sent up on appeal from its decisions.

(k) Schedule dates and locations for state board examinations for examining qualified applicants for licensure.

(l) Examine, license and renew licenses of duly qualified applicants.

(m) Appoint and employ a qualified person who shall not be a member of the board to serve as executive director, define the duties, fix the compensation, and delegate to him or her those activities that will expedite the functions of the board. The executive director shall meet all the qualifications for board members, and shall in addition:

(i) Have had at least a master's degree in nursing, eight (8) years' experience as a registered nurse, five (5) of which shall be in teaching or in administration, or a combination thereof; and

(ii) Have been actively engaged in nursing for at least five (5) years immediately preceding appointment.

(n) Employ, discharge, define duties, and fix compensation of such other persons as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this article.

(o) Secure the services of research consultants as deemed necessary who shall receive a per diem, travel and other necessary expenses incurred while engaged by the board.

(p) * * * Enter into contracts with any other state or federal agency or with any private person, organization or group capable of contracting, if it finds such action to be in the public interest and in the furtherance of its responsibilities.

(q) Upon reasonable suspicion that a holder of a license issued under this article has violated any statutory ground for denial of licensure as set forth in Section 73-15-29 or is guilty of any offense specified in Section 73-15-33, require the license holder to undergo a fingerprint-based criminal history

records check of the Mississippi central criminal database and the Federal Bureau of Investigation criminal history database, in the same manner as required for applicants for licensure under Sections 73-15-19(1) and 73-15-21(1).

SECTION 4. Section 73-15-25, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

73-15-25. In addition to all other powers and duties now vested by law in the State Department of Education, it is hereby empowered and required, acting in this behalf by and through its Division of Vocational Education, to:

1. Contract with the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges to establish by rules and regulations and promulgate uniform standards for the accreditation of schools of practical nursing in this state insofar as concerns the eligibility of graduates of such schools to take the examination to become licensed practical nurses;
2. Contract with the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges to issue to such schools * * * certificates of accreditation as may be proper under such standards.

SECTION 5. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2010.

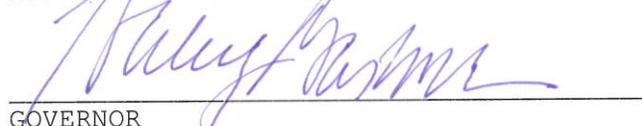
PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
February 10, 2010


SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PASSED BY THE SENATE
March 10, 2010


PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

APPROVED BY THE GOVERNOR


GOVERNOR

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