



NHNA Position Statement

New Hampshire Nurses Association

Established In 1906

POSITION STATEMENT

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SB 153 adopting the nurse licensure compact

Committee: Public Institutions, Health and Human Services

Hearing Date: March 18, 2003

Position: OPPOSE

The New Hampshire Nurses' Association (NHNA) opposes SB 153 because it endangers public safety and places an increased burden on New Hampshire's licensed nurses and their employers, at a time of deepening shortages.

SB 153 endangers public safety. The primary mission of the NH Board of Nursing (the Board) is to protect public safety. It accomplishes this in three ways: 1) ongoing enhancement and diligent enforcement of the Nurse Practice Act and supporting administrative rules; 2) participation in the credentialing process of all nursing education programs throughout the State; and, 3) adherence to a process of licensing that ensures competency of the all licensees. Enactment of the Nurse Licensure Compact (the Compact) would strip the Board of the utility of each of these tools. First, while the Board would continue to enhance and enforce the statute and regulations for all licensees, it would have no jurisdiction over nurses who come into New Hampshire under the Compact. In most cases, the Board would not even be aware of a compact nurse practicing in New Hampshire. Secondly, the Board has no authority under the Compact to ensure that nursing education programs in other states meet its present high standards. Finally, the Board would no longer be in a position to assure the public or nursing employers that all nurses practicing in New Hampshire are competent.

SB 153 places an unreasonable burden on New Hampshire nurse licensees. Every nurse can articulate how important it is to be able to trust the competency of one's colleagues. The Compact places an unreasonable burden on supervising nurses to make independent judgments regarding the competency and professional integrity of the staff with whom they work. Without an initial indication from the Board that a nurse has met certain educational standards and is free of pending disciplinary action, this will become an arduous if not impossible task.

SB 153 places an increased burden on nursing employers across the State. If enacted, employers will not only be doing voluntary criminal background checks, but they will now have to conduct professional disciplinary action and continuing education credit reviews as well. If the employer cannot rely on the Board to attest to the current competency of a nurse, then the employer will be forced to seek out information directly, from states in which the prospective employee identifies licensure and former employment. It would be a simple matter for the prospective employee not to mention a compact state in which s/he previously worked and where a disciplinary action may be pending or was taken against the nurse.

SB 153 may result in a worsening of the nursing shortage in New Hampshire. While proponents of this bill have argued that the Compact will ease the nursing shortage by making it easier for nurses to practice in New Hampshire, there is no indication that the "revolving door" will not work against us, resulting in an overall loss to the State of this critical workforce.

The Compact exposes an unsuspecting public and the State's professional nursing workforce to unnecessary risk from incompetent and unscrupulous nurses or nurse-imposters who jump from one compact state to the next, managing to stay one step ahead of legitimate disciplinary proceedings. Public safety and nursing morale should not be jeopardized in response to private stakeholders whose only motive in supporting the Compact is to save money. Proponents of SB 153 have failed to articulate a compelling reason to assume these risks.

We urge you to vote NO on SB 153.