

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Health Regulation Committee

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BILL: SB 1226

INTRODUCER: Senator Joyner

SUBJECT: Health Care Fraud

DATE: March 11, 2011

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Brown	Stovall	HR	<b>Favorable</b>
2.	_____	_____	CJ	_____
3.	_____	_____	BC	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

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**I. Summary:**

The bill amends Florida Statutes relating to the licensure responsibility and authority of the Department of Health (DOH) over health professions and occupations and the grounds for a board, or the DOH if there is no applicable board, to refuse to admit certain candidates seeking licensure to any examination and refuse to issue or renew a license, certificate, or registration to certain applicants.

This bill substantially amends the following section of the Florida Statutes: 456.0635.

**II. Present Situation:**

The Legislature created s. 456.0635, F.S., in 2009 with the enactment of CS/CS/CS/SB 1986, a comprehensive bill designed to address systemic health care fraud in Florida. That bill increased the Medicaid program's authority to address fraud, particularly as it relates to home health services; increased health care facility and health care practitioner licensing standards to keep fraudulent actors from obtaining a health care license in Florida; and created disincentives to commit Medicaid fraud by increasing the administrative penalties for committing Medicaid fraud, posting sanctioned and terminated Medicaid providers on the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) website, and creating additional criminal felonies for committing health care fraud; among other anti-fraud provisions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See ch. 2009-223, Laws of Florida.

***Health Care Practitioner Licensure Authority of the Department of Health***

The DOH is responsible for the licensure of most health care practitioners in the state.

Chapter 456, F.S., provides general provisions for the regulation of health care professions in addition to the regulatory authority in specific practice acts for each profession or occupation.

Section 456.001, F.S., defines “health care practitioner” as any person licensed under:

- Chapter 457 (acupuncture)
- Chapter 458 (medical practice)
- Chapter 459 (osteopathic medicine)
- Chapter 460 (chiropractic medicine)
- Chapter 461 (podiatric medicine)
- Chapter 462 (naturopathy)
- Chapter 463 (optometry)
- Chapter 464 (nursing)
- Chapter 465 (pharmacy)
- Chapter 466 (dentistry)
- Chapter 467 (midwifery)
- Part I, part II, part III, part V, part X, part XIII, or part XIV of chapter 468 (speech-language pathology and audiology; nursing home administration; occupational therapy; respiratory therapy; dietetics and nutrition practice; athletic trainers; and orthotics, prosthetics, and pedorthics)
- Chapter 478 (electrolysis)
- Chapter 480 (massage practice)
- Part III or part IV of chapter 483 (clinical laboratory personnel and medical physicists)
- Chapter 484 (dispensing of optical devices and hearing aids)
- Chapter 486 (physical therapy practice)
- Chapter 490 (psychological services)
- Chapter 491 (clinical, counseling, and psychotherapy services)

Current law<sup>2</sup> prohibits the DOH and the medical boards within the DOH from allowing any person to sit for an examination who has been:

- Convicted of, or entered a plea of guilty or nolo contendere to, regardless of adjudication, a felony under ch. 409, F.S.,<sup>3</sup> ch. 817, F.S.,<sup>4</sup> ch. 893, F.S.,<sup>5</sup> 21 U.S.C. ss. 801-970,<sup>6</sup> or 42 U.S.C. ss. 1395-1396,<sup>7</sup> unless the sentence and any subsequent period of probation for such conviction or pleas ended more than 15 years prior to the date of the application;
- Terminated for cause from the Florida Medicaid program unless the applicant has been in good standing with the Florida Medicaid program for the most recent 5 years; or
- Terminated for cause, pursuant to the appeals procedures established by the state or Federal Government, from any other state Medicaid program or the federal Medicare program, unless

<sup>2</sup> See s. 456.0635, F.S.

<sup>3</sup> ch. 409, F.S., “Social and Economic Assistance,” is in Title XXX, “Social Welfare,” and includes the Florida Medicaid and Kidcare programs, among other programs.

<sup>4</sup> ch. 817, F.S., “Fraudulent Practices,” is in Title XLVI, “Crimes.”

<sup>5</sup> ch. 893, F.S., “Drug Abuse Prevention and Control,” is in Title XLVI, “Crimes.”

<sup>6</sup> 21 U.S.C. ss. 801-970 create the Controlled Substances Act, which regulates the registration of manufacturers, distributors, and dispensers of controlled substances at the federal level.

<sup>7</sup> 42 U.S.C. ss. 1395-1396 create the federal Medicare, Medicaid, and Children’s Health Insurance programs.

the applicant has been in good standing with a state Medicaid program or the federal Medicare program for the most recent 5 years and the termination occurred at least 20 years prior to the date of application.

The DOH and the medical boards must refuse to issue or renew a license, certificate, or registration to an applicant, or person affiliated with that applicant, who has violated any of the provisions listed above.

***Implementation of Current Law by the Department of Health***

Neither the DOH nor the boards deny licensure based on an applicant's termination for cause from the federal Medicare program because federal law does not implement such terminations "for cause." The DOH does not deny licensure renewal based on an applicant's termination for cause from the federal Medicare program for the same reason.

The DOH applies the denial of renewals to offenses occurring after July 1, 2009, when s. 456.0635, F.S., took effect.

**III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

**Section 1** amends s. 456.0635, F.S. The catch line is changed from "Medicaid fraud; disqualification for license, certificate, or registration," to "Health care fraud; disqualification for license, certificate, or registration." Other references in the statute to the general subject of "Medicaid fraud" are changed to "health care fraud."

The bill separates the disqualifications for licensure, certification, or registration from those relating to licensure renewal into two different statutory subsections.

The bill expands the current provisions that require a board or the DOH to refuse to admit a candidate to any examination and to refuse to issue a license to any applicant who has been convicted of, or entered a plea of guilty or nolo contendere to, regardless of adjudication, a felony under ch. 409, F.S., ch. 817, F.S., or ch. 893, F.S., to include similar felony offenses committed in another state or jurisdiction. The bill deletes the provision in current law that nullifies the prohibition if the sentence and probation period ended more than 15 years prior to the date of application, and replaces it with the following provisions:

- For felonies of the first or second degree, the prohibition expires when the sentence and probation period have ended more than 15 years before the date of application.
- For felonies of the third degree, the prohibition expires when the sentence and probation period have ended more than 10 years before the date of application, except for felonies of the third degree under s. 893.13(6)(a), F.S.<sup>8</sup>
- For felonies of the third degree under s. 893.13(6)(a), F.S., the prohibition expires when the sentence and probation period have ended more than 5 years before the date of application.

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<sup>8</sup> Section 893.13(6)(a), F.S. makes it unlawful for any person to be in actual or constructive possession of a controlled substance unless such controlled substance was lawfully obtained from a practitioner or pursuant to a valid prescription or order of a practitioner while acting in the course of his or her professional practice, or to be in actual or constructive possession of a controlled substance except as otherwise authorized by ch. 893, F.S.

For felonies in which the defendant entered a plea of guilty or nolo contendere in an agreement with the court to enter a pretrial intervention or drug diversion program, the bill prohibits the DOH from approving or denying the application for a license, certificate, or registration until the final resolution of the case.

The bill requires a board or the DOH to refuse to admit a candidate to any examination and to refuse to issue a license to any applicant who has been convicted of, or entered a plea of guilty or nolo contendere to, regardless of adjudication, a felony under 21 U.S.C. ss. 801-970 or 42 U.S.C. ss. 1395-1396, unless the sentence and any probation period for such conviction or plea ended more than 15 years before the date of the application.

The bill deletes reference to “terminated for cause” from the federal Medicare program as grounds for which the DOH is required to deny a license and creates a new standard to exclude applicants currently listed on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General’s List of Excluded Individuals and Entities.

The bill specifies that the prohibitions above relating to examination, licensure, certification, and registration do not apply to applicants for initial licensure or certification who were enrolled in an educational or training program on or before July 1, 2010, which was recognized by a board, or by the DOH if there is no applicable board, and who applied for licensure after July 1, 2010.

The bill creates a new statutory subsection relating to licensure *renewal* that requires denial of renewal for the same felony offenses referenced above, except that in order to trigger the renewal prohibition, the conviction or plea must have occurred after July 1, 2010. The bill includes the same provisions for denying licensure renewal as those describe above for examination, licensure, certification, and registration, relative to exclusion from the Medicare program and termination from Medicaid programs in Florida or other states, as well as identical provisions regarding applicants who have entered a pretrial intervention or drug diversion program.

The bill requires the DOH to adopt rules to administer the provisions related to denial of licensure renewal.

**Section 2** creates an effective date for the bill of July 1, 2011.

#### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

##### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

The provisions of this bill have no impact on municipalities and the counties under the requirements of Article VII, Section 18 of the Florida Constitution.

##### **B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

The provisions of the bill have no impact on public records or open meetings issues under the requirements of Article I, Section 24(a) and (b) of the Florida Constitution.

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

The provisions of this bill have no impact on the trust fund restrictions under the requirements of Article III, Subsection 19(f) of the Florida Constitution.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

The bill will affect the ability of certain applicants to become licensed or to renew a license and thereby affect their ability to qualify or remain qualified for gainful employment within certain occupations regulated by the DOH. The bill will apply the statutory licensure prohibitions to persons with felony convictions or pleas effective in other states the same as they are applied to persons with felony convictions or pleas effective in Florida. This will create more equity in the application of the law and should result in more mandatory denials among persons within that demographic. However, the bill also relaxes the standards in other ways, such as the “sliding scale” for the prohibition’s duration based on the type of felony, which should result in fewer mandatory denials under those circumstances.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

The DOH will experience a recurring increase in workload to implement the bill and non-recurring costs for rule-making, the costs of which are indeterminate.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

Currently, s. 120.60, F.S., requires the DOH to approve or deny an application within 90 days. The bill tolls the time for persons in a court-approved pretrial intervention or drug diversion program. For renewal applications, renewals that are not approved are classified as delinquent and then become null and void under s. 456.036, F.S. Under the bill, if the DOH is prevented from approving or denying a renewal application until final resolution of the court case, the result would be the same as a denial if the license becomes null and void due to lack of approval.

The bill requires the DOH to adopt rules to administer the bill’s provisions related to denial of licensure renewal but not with regard to licensure applications. Rule-making related to denial of licensure renewal appears unnecessary because the renewal standards are explicitly provided in the bill.

The bill contains no guidance or standards for determining what constitutes a “similar felony offense committed in another state or jurisdiction.” Criminal statutes are different in every state. When licensure or renewal is denied based on a “similar” felony committed in another state or jurisdiction, the applicant may be encouraged to challenge the denial and argue that without specific standards within Florida law, the characteristics of the out-of-state felony cannot be justified by the DOH in keeping with legislative intent as being adequately “similar” to any certain offense within ch. 409, 817, or 893, F.S.

Section 456.0635(3), F.S., as created by the bill, refers to a board renewing a license, certification, or registration. However, only the DOH renews licenses – boards do not.

**VIII. Additional Information:**

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**  
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.