

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.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Health Policy

BILL: CS/SB 1480

INTRODUCER: Health Policy Committee and Senator Burton

SUBJECT: Temporary Certificates for Practice in Areas of Critical Need

DATE: January 28, 2026

REVISED: _____

| | ANALYST | STAFF DIRECTOR | REFERENCE | ACTION |
|----|---------|----------------|-----------|--------|
| 1. | Smith | Brown | HP | Fav/CS |
| 2. | | | AHS | |
| 3. | | | RC | |

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 1480 amends provisions relating to temporary certificates for practice in areas of critical need. It authorizes a certificateholder to continue providing primary care services to patients in an area of critical need after the area has lost its designation if the practitioner maintains an active primary care treatment relationship in the area with at least one patient and satisfies all other applicable requirements.

The bill takes effect upon becoming a law.

II. Present Situation:

Health Care Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs)

The federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) designates health care shortage areas in the U.S. The two main types of health care shortage areas designated by the HRSA are HPSAs and Medically Underserved Areas.

There are three categories of HPSA: primary care, dental health, and mental health.¹ HPSAs can be designated as geographic areas; areas with a specific group of people such as low-income

¹ *Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) and Your Site*, National Health Service Corps, available at <https://bh.w.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bureau-health-workforce/workforce-shortage-areas/nhsc-hpsas-practice-sites.pdf>, (last visited Jan 22, 2026).

populations, homeless populations, and migrant farmworker populations; or as a specific facility that serves a population or geographic area with a shortage of providers.² HRSA designates a HPSA when an area, population group, or facility meets federal criteria that focus on provider availability and access, including minimum population-to-provider ratio requirements and access measures such as travel time to the nearest source of care.³

2026 Florida HPSA Statistics

As of January 1, 2026, it would take an additional 1,434 primary care practitioners, 1,271 dental practitioners, and 545 mental health practitioners to eliminate Florida's HPSA shortage areas.⁴

Of the *primary care* HPSAs in Florida (320 total), 23 are geographic area designations, 134 are population group designations, and 163 are facility designations.⁵

Of the *dental health* HPSAs in Florida (283 total), 6 are geographic area designations, 111 are population group designations, and 166 are facility designations.⁶

Of the *mental health* HPSAs in Florida (239 total), 31 are geographic area designations, 42 are population group designations, and 166 are facility designations.⁷

Scoring and Designations

Each HPSA is given a score by the HRSA indicating the severity of the shortage in that area, population, or facility. The scores for primary care and mental health HPSAs can be between 0 and 25 and between 0 and 26 for dental health HPSAs, with a higher score indicating a more severe shortage.⁸

HRSA regularly rechecks HPSA designations to confirm that an area, population group, or facility still meets the shortage criteria. If updated data suggest an area, group, or facility may no longer qualify, HRSA can label it "Proposed for Withdrawal," which is an early warning that it could lose its HPSA status, but it is not final.⁹ During this period, the designation is generally still active and counted, while state and local partners have an opportunity to review the data and submit updates or corrections. If HRSA later issues a final withdrawal, the designation is removed, and programs or benefits that rely on an active HPSA may no longer apply.

² *What is a Shortage Designation?*, HRSA, available at <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/workforce-shortage-areas/shortage-designation#hpsas>, (last visited Jan 22, 2026).

³ Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Workforce, *2025 National Shortage Designation Update (NSDU): Introducing New Data to Existing HPSAs* (May 29, 2025), <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bureau-health-workforce/2025-nsdu-may-29-webinar-slides.pdf> (last visited Jan. 20, 2026).

⁴ Bureau of Health Workforce, HRSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Designated Health Professional Shortage Areas Statistics, First Quarter of Fiscal Year 2026* (December 31, 2025), available at <https://data.hrsa.gov/default/generatehpsaquarterlyreport> (last visited Jan 22, 2026).

⁵ *Id.* at 5.

⁶ *Id.* at 8.

⁷ *Id.* at 11.

⁸ HRSA, *Scoring Shortage Designations*, available at <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/workforce-shortage-areas/shortage-designation/scoring>, (last visited Jan 22, 2026).

⁹ Health Resources and Services Administration, *Federal Register Notice* (listing designated HPSAs reflecting Federal Register notice published Nov. 5, 2024; status as of Oct. 15, 2024), <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/shortage-areas/frn> (last visited Jan. 20, 2026).

New areas, population groups, or facilities can be proposed for designation when a State Primary Care Office submits an application in HRSA's online system.¹⁰ HRSA reviews the application and, if it meets the criteria, HRSA approves the designation, calculates a score, and notifies the Primary Care Office and any identified interested parties.¹¹ Florida's Primary Care Office is the Health Resources and Access Section within the Division of Public Health Statistics and Performance Improvement at the Florida Department of Health (DOH).¹²

Florida Areas of Critical Need

The Florida Statutes require the State Surgeon General to determine the areas of critical need in which a temporary certificateholder may practice.¹³ Those areas must include health professional shortage areas designated by the United States Department of Health and Human Services.¹⁴

In August 2022, Florida's Surgeon General, Joseph Ladapo, issued an order¹⁵ determining the following areas as areas of critical need:

- Primary care HPSAs;¹⁶
- Mental health HPSAs;¹⁷
- Volunteer Health Care Provider Program participants;¹⁸ and
- Free clinics.

The order also provided that, regarding temporary certificates, practicing in any location that was in a designated HPSA at the time the temporary certificate was issued or renewed, whichever was later, but was withdrawn by HRSA as published in the Federal Register during the term of the temporary certificate, would be considered practicing in an area of critical need until the next temporary certificate renewal.

The Surgeon General also designated the following institutions as areas of critical need which had been operating as approved institutions in a designated area of critical need but which are not

¹⁰ Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Workforce, *Reviewing Shortage Designation Applications* (last reviewed Jan. 2025), <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/workforce-shortage-areas/shortage-designation/reviewing-applications> (last visited Jan. 20, 2026).

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Workforce, *Contact Your State/Territorial Primary Care Office*, <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/workforce-shortage-areas/shortage-designation/contact-state-primary-care-office> (last visited Jan. 20, 2026).

¹³ Sections. 458.315(3)(a), 459.0076(3)(a), and 464.0121(3)(a), F.S.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Florida Department of Health, Office of the State Surgeon General, *Order of the State Surgeon General Determining Areas of Critical Need* (Aug. 10, 2022), available at <https://flboardofmedicine.gov/pdfs/ssg-order.pdf> (last visited Jan. 27, 2026).

¹⁶ Health Resources and Services Administration, *Find Shortage Areas by Address* (Health Workforce Shortage Areas), <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/shortage-areas/by-address> (last visited Jan. 20, 2026).

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Florida Department of Health, *Volunteer Health Care Provider Program: Provider Program* (describing the Volunteer Health Care Provider Program and participation requirements), <https://www.floridahealth.gov/licensing-regulations/provider-partner-resources/volunteer-health-services/provider-program/> (last visited Jan. 20, 2026).

located in a HPSA, so long as the facility continues to provide health care to meet the needs of the underserved population in its area:¹⁹

- Crossroads, 444 Valparaiso Parkway, Building C, Valparaiso, Florida 32580.
- Med Express Urgent Care, 13856 North Dale Mabry, Tampa, Florida 33618.
- Interamerican Medical Center Group, 15529 Bull Run Road, Miami Lakes, Florida 33014.

An area of critical need may lose its designation either by action of the State Surgeon General or if it no longer qualifies under the Surgeon General's criteria by losing its primary care or mental health HPSA designation. A temporary certificateholder who is practicing in an area that loses its designation may continue practicing under the certificate until the next annual renewal review; at that time, the certificateholder will no longer meet the criteria to hold the certificate to practice in that area.

Temporary Certificates to Practice in Areas of Critical Need

Florida law authorizes the Board of Medicine, the Board of Osteopathic Medicine, and the Board of Nursing to issue a temporary certificate to practice in areas of critical need, as determined by the Surgeon General, for out-of-state licensed health care practitioners. Section 458.315, F.S. (allopathic physicians and physician assistants), s. 459.0076, F.S. (osteopathic physicians and physician assistants), and s. 464.0121, F.S. (advanced practice registered nurses), are structured similarly and contain parallel eligibility criteria, practice settings, and oversight requirements, as detailed below.

An allopathic physician, osteopathic physician, or an APRN who is licensed to practice in any jurisdiction of the U.S. whose license is currently valid may be issued a temporary certificate for practice in areas of critical need. An APRN must also meet educational and training requirements established by the Board of Nursing. An allopathic or osteopathic physician seeking the temporary certificate must pay an application fee of \$300.

A physician assistant licensed to practice in any state of the U.S. or the District of Columbia whose license is currently valid may be issued a temporary certificate for practice in areas of critical need. In 2025, the statute was amended to narrow eligibility from licensure in any U.S. jurisdiction to licensure in any state or D.C.²⁰

Each board is authorized to administer an abbreviated oral examination to determine competency and may not require a written regular exam. Within 60 days after receipt of an application, the board must: issue the temporary certificate; notify the applicant of denial; or notify the applicant that the board recommends additional assessment, training, education, or other requirements as a condition of certification. The board may deny the application, issue the temporary certificate with reasonable restrictions, or require the applicant to meet any reasonable conditions if it has been more than three years since the applicant has actively practiced and the respective board determines the applicant lacks clinical competency, adequate skills, necessary medical knowledge, or sufficient clinical decision-making.

¹⁹ *Supra* note 7.

²⁰ Chapter 2025-114, ss. 10-11, Laws of Fla.

The boards must review the temporary certificate holder at least annually to ensure that he or she is in compliance with the practice act and rules adopted thereunder. A board may revoke or restrict the temporary certificate for practice in areas of critical need if noncompliance is found.

Temporary Certificateholder Statistics

According to the DOH, Medical Quality Assurance Annual Report (FY 2024–2025), the temporary “Area of Critical Need” credential types implicated by SB 1480 represent a relatively small population within Florida’s health workforce.²¹ The DOH reports:

- 1,253 Medical Doctor temporary certificates in total (1,130 active, 93 delinquent, and 27 retired, with the remainder inactive).
- 60 Physician Assistant temporary certificates (all 60 active).
- 2 Osteopathic Medicine temporary certificates (both active).
- 2 APRN temporary certificates (both active).

Collectively, these data indicate 1,317 total temporary certificates to practice in areas of critical need, with 1,194 being active.²²

The report also indicates that initial applications for temporary certificates were received as follows: 120 for medical doctors, 273 for physician assistants, 1 for osteopathic physicians, and 11 for APRNs.²³

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill amends the statutes governing temporary certificates for certain health care practitioners who practice in areas of critical need, including allopathic physicians and physician assistants, osteopathic physicians and physician assistants, and advanced practice registered nurses. The bill creates a pathway under which a certificate may remain usable in a location that later loses its “area of critical need” designation.

If an area of critical need loses its designation, and if the certificateholder has established an active primary care treatment relationship in that area with one or more patients, he or she may continue providing primary care services in that area to patients under the certificate. The continued practice would be limited to the geographic area, population, or facility in which the certificateholder was already treating patients.

Under current law, the Board of Medicine, Board of Osteopathic Medicine, or the Board of Nursing, as applicable, must review each temporary certificateholder at least annually to ascertain that the certificateholder is complying with his or her practice act and related rules. Under the bill, if an area of critical need loses its designation, the board in question must find that all requirements, other than the area being designated as a current area of critical need, are satisfied in order to re-authorize continued primary care practice by an affected certificateholder under his or her certificate.

²¹ Florida Department of Health, *2024-2025 Medical Quality Assurance Annual Report*, available at <https://flhealthsource.gov/pdf/reports/2025.10.31.FY24-25MQAAR-FINAL1.pdf> (last visited Jan. 27, 2026).

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.*

The bill may provide continuity of care for patients who began receiving treatment during the period in which the location was designated as an area of critical need.

Section 1 of the bill amends s. 458.315, F.S., relating to temporary certificates issued by the Board of Medicine.

Section 2 of the bill amends s. 459.0076, F.S., relating to temporary certificates issued by the Board of Osteopathic Medicine.

Section 3 of the bill amends s. 464.0121, F.S., relating to temporary certificates issued by the Board of Nursing.

Section 4 of the bill provides that the bill takes effect upon the act becoming a law.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None identified.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None identified.

C. **Government Sector Impact:**

Due to the relatively small number of temporary certificateholders, any impact on the Boards of Medicine, Osteopathic Medicine, and Nursing, or the DOH is expected to be minimal and absorbed within existing resources.

VI. **Technical Deficiencies:**

None identified.

VII. **Related Issues:**

None identified.

VIII. **Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 458.315, 459.0076, 464.0121.

IX. **Additional Information:**

A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Health Policy on January 26, 2026:

The CS:

- Removes the requirement in the underlying bill that the practitioner may only treat established patients after the area loses its designation, enabling the practitioner to provide primary care services to new patients.
- Limits the continued practice under the otherwise-expired certificate to primary care.
- Clarifies that the treatment relationship must be located within the area rather than the patient.
- Clarifies that the applicable board must find the certificateholder has satisfied certain requirements during its annual review of the temporary certificate in order to authorize continued practice under the otherwise-expired certificate.

B. **Amendments:**

None.