

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILL ANALYSIS

This bill analysis was prepared by nonpartisan committee staff and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

BILL #: [CS/HB 237](#)

TITLE: Use of Professional Nursing Titles

SPONSOR(S): Salzman

COMPANION BILL: None

LINKED BILLS: None

RELATED BILLS: [SB 36](#) (Sharief)

Committee References

[Health Professions & Programs](#)

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[Health & Human Services](#)



SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

CS/HB 237 expressly authorizes nurses licensed to practice in Florida and hold doctoral degrees to use the titles “[Doctor of Nursing Practice](#),” “[Doctor of Philosophy](#),” and the abbreviations of “D.N.P.” “Ph.D.” in a manner consistent with the degree possessed.

The bill requires such nurses to specify their profession when using the title of “doctor,” in a clinical setting.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

None

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

CS/HB 237 expressly authorizes nurses licensed to practice in Florida and hold doctoral degrees to use the titles “[Doctor of Nursing Practice](#),” “[Doctor of Philosophy](#),” and the abbreviations of “D.N.P.” “Ph.D.” in a manner consistent with the degree possessed.

The bill requires such nurses to specify their profession when using the title of “doctor,” in a clinical setting. A violation of this section of Florida Statute constitutes a misdemeanor of the first degree. (Section [1](#)).

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2026. (Section [2](#)).

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

Nurse Licensure & Regulation

The Division of Medical Quality Assurance (MQA), within the Department of Health (DOH), has general regulatory authority over health care practitioners, including nurses. The Board of Nursing (BON), housed within the MQA, oversees the practice of nursing professions licensed under Part 1 of Chapter 464, F.S. This includes, Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), Registered Nurses (RNs), Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), and Autonomous APRNs.¹

There are two primary categories of nurse licensure: professional and practical nurses.

¹ [S. 464.004, F.S.](#)

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DATE: 1/15/2026

- Practical nurses, or licensed practical nurses (LPNs), perform selected acts, including the administration of treatments and medications, in the care of the ill, injured, or infirm; the promotion of wellness, maintenance of health, and prevention of illness of others under the direction of an authorized health care provider.²
- Professional nurses, often referred to as registered nurses (RNs), perform acts requiring substantial specialized knowledge, judgement, and nursing skill based on applied principles of psychological, biological, physical, and social sciences.³
 - Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) are a subcategory of professional nurses have completed additional education and training in order to be licensed in an advanced nursing practice.⁴ In addition to the practice of professional nursing, perform advanced-level nursing acts approved by the BON by virtue of their post-basic, specialized education, training, and experience.⁵

To be eligible for initial licensure as an LPN or RN, an individual must, among other requirements, have graduated from an approved⁶ prelicensure nursing education program and passed the national licensure examination, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing Licensure Exam (NCLEX), for the level of nursing the applicant is seeking to practice.⁷

Additionally, as Florida is a member of the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC),⁸ RNs and LPNs licensed to practice in other NLC member states may be able to practice in the state if they have been issued a multi-state license under the NLC. Nurses practicing under a multi-state license must comply with the practice laws of the state in which they are practicing, or where the patient is located.⁹ Florida is one of 43 US jurisdictions who are members of the NLC.¹⁰

Nurse Education

To be licensed as a nurse, a person must have completed an accredited or BON-approved pre-licensure nursing education program. In Florida, nursing education programs are offered by state universities, Florida colleges, public school districts, private institutions licensed by the Commission for Independent Education (CIE), private institutions that are members of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida (ICUF), and religious institutions authorized by law to offer nursing education programs. Pre-licensure RN programs offered in Florida include Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN), Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), and Entry into Practice (Direct Entry) Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) programs.¹¹

Licensed RNs may also pursue further nursing education through post-licensure, graduate-level programs to advance their formal education and training. The completion of some masters and doctoral programs may enable a person to transition to an APRN license.¹² In order to be licensed as an APRN, an RN must hold a master's or doctoral degree in advanced nursing practice and be certified by the appropriate specialty board.¹³

² [S. 464.003\(18\), F.S.](#); LPNs may practice under the direction of a registered nurse, a licensed allopathic physician, a licensed osteopathic physician, a licensed podiatric physician, or a licensed dentist.

³ [Ss. 464.003\(19\), F.S., 464.003\(21\), F.S.](#)

⁴ [S. 464.003\(2\), F.S.](#)

⁵ APRNs may perform advanced nursing and medical acts only to the extent allowed by the written protocol under which they practice, unless the APRN is registered for autonomous practice under [s. 464.0123, F.S.](#)

⁶ Or a program that the Board has determined to be equivalent to an approved program; *see*, [s. 464.008\(1\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

⁷ [S. 464.008\(1\), F.S.](#)

⁸ [S. 464.0095, F.S.](#)

⁹ S. 464.0095, Art. III, (5), F.S.

¹⁰ Nurse Licensure Compact, *NLC Map*. Available at https://www.nursecompact.com/files/NLC_Map.pdf (last visited January 7, 2026).

¹¹ Florida Center for Nursing, *The State of Nursing Education in Florida* (2025). Available at <https://www.flcenterfornursing.org/research-data/nursing-education-reports/the-state-of-nursing-education-in-florida-2025/> (last visited January 6, 2026); *see also*, [s. 1005.06, F.S.](#)

¹² *Id.*

¹³ [S. 464.012, F.S.](#), and Rule 64B9-4.002, F.A.C.

A Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) is a terminal degree in clinical nursing that focuses on advanced clinical practice and leadership. In Florida, DNP programs prepare nurses for roles that require expertise in clinical practice, healthcare management, and policy influence. DNP programs emphasize evidence-based care, system improvement and public health.¹⁴ As of 2024, approximately 1.3 percent of RNs and 14.3 percent of APRNs licensed in Florida held a DNP.¹⁵

A Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in nursing is a research-focused doctoral degree that prepares scholars to advance the knowledge base for nursing and health care and related areas such as health policy and informatics in a primarily academic setting. While the vast majority of students pursuing a Ph.D. degree in nursing are licensed nurses, clinical practice is not the focus of the degree.¹⁶ As of 2024, approximately 0.3 percent of RNs and 1.3 percent of APRNs licensed in Florida held a Ph.D. in nursing.¹⁷

Titles and Abbreviations in Nursing

The Nurse Practice Act establishes titles and abbreviations that may only be used by an individual if they are licensed accordingly. For example, the title “Registered Nurse,” and the abbreviation “R.N.” may only be used by a person who is licensed to practice *professional nursing* in Florida or under a multi-state license through the Nurse Licensure Compact, or is practicing under the 60-day exception for out-of-state licensees established under S. 464.022(8), F.S.¹⁸ A violation of the restrictions on the use of these titles constitutes a misdemeanor of the first degree.¹⁹

As health care practitioners, a licensed nurse may also be subject to professional discipline for the following actions related to the use of professional titles:

- Making misleading, deceptive, or fraudulent representations in or related to the practice of the licensee’s profession.²⁰
- Failing to identify through written notice, which may include the wearing of a name tag, or orally to a patient the type of license under which the practitioner is practicing. Any advertisement for health care services naming the practitioner must identify the type of license the practitioner holds.²¹

The penalties for such a violation range from a reprimand and a \$250 fine to a \$700 fine and a license suspension.²²

Current law does not expressly authorize or prohibit the use of the titles “Doctor of Nursing Practice,” “Doctor of Philosophy,” and the abbreviations of “D.N.P.” “Ph.D.”

¹⁴ Department of Health, *Agency Bill Analysis for HB 237 (2026)*, on file with the Health Professions and Programs Subcommittee; see also, Waldrop, J., Reynolds, S., McMillian-Bohler, J., Graton, M., & Ledbetter, L. (2023) *Evaluation of DNP Program Essentials of Doctoral Nursing Education: A Scoping Review*. Journal of Professional Nursing, 46:7-12, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2022.11.009>.

¹⁵ Email from Rayna Letourneau, Executive Director of the Florida Center for Nursing, *Re: Recent DNP/PhD Data* (January 9, 2026). On File with the Health Professions & Programs Subcommittee.

¹⁶ The American Association of Colleges of Nursing, *The Research-Focused Doctoral Program in Nursing: Pathways to Excellence* (2022). Available at <https://www.aacnursing.org/Portals/42/News/Position-Statements/Pathways-Excellence-Position-Statement.pdf> (last visited January 7, 2026).

¹⁷ Email from Rayna Letourneau, Executive Director of the Florida Center for Nursing, *Re: Recent DNP/PhD Data* (January 9, 2026). On File with the Health Professions & Programs Subcommittee.

¹⁸ S. 464.015, F.S.; *see also, S. 464.022(8), F.S.*, allows a nurse currently licensed in another state or territory of the United States may perform nursing services in this state for a period of 60 days, 120 days for the spouse of a military member relocating upon military orders, after furnishing to the employer satisfactory evidence of current licensure in another state or territory and having submitted proper application and fees to the board for licensure prior to employment.

¹⁹ S. 464.015(10), F.S.; such violation is punishable as established in s. 775.082, F.S., and s. 775.083, F.S.

²⁰ S. 464.072(1)(a), F.S.

²¹ S. 456.072(1)(t), F.S.

²² Rule 64B9-8.006(1)(l), F.A.C.

OTHER RESOURCES:

National Council of State Boards of Nursing: [Nurse Licensure Compact Map](#)

BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
<u>Health Professions & Programs Subcommittee</u>	18 Y, 0 N, As CS	1/14/2026	McElroy	Osborne
THE CHANGES ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE:	Expressly authorized licensed nurses who hold doctoral degrees to use the titles "Doctor of Nursing Practice," and "Doctor of Philosophy," and related abbreviations, consistent with the degree held.			
<u>Health & Human Services Committee</u>				

THIS BILL ANALYSIS HAS BEEN UPDATED TO INCORPORATE ALL OF THE CHANGES DESCRIBED ABOVE.