

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: SB 36

INTRODUCER: Senator Sharief and others

SUBJECT: Use of Professional Nursing Titles

DATE: January 30, 2026

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Smith</u>	<u>Brown</u>	<u>HP</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>AHS</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	<u>RC</u>	_____

I. Summary:

SB 36 explicitly authorizes only licensed nurses to use the titles “Doctor of Nursing Practice” or “Doctor of Philosophy” and the corresponding abbreviations, “D.N.P.” or “Ph.D.,” if the nurse holds that doctoral degree. The bill requires doctoral degree holders to specify their profession when using the term “doctor.”

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2026.

II. Present Situation:

Nurse Licensure and Regulation

The Division of Medical Quality Assurance (MQA), within the Department of Health (DOH), has general regulatory authority over Florida’s licensed health care practitioners. The MQA works in conjunction with the Board of Nursing (Board), created under part I of ch. 464, F.S., to license and regulate approximately 50,378 advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), 62,230 licensed practical nurses (LPNs), and 347,857 registered nurses (RNs) who are practicing in Florida under an active Florida license.¹ The DOH and the Board also regulate approximately 4,195 RNs and 549 LPNs from other states who are authorized to practice in Florida through the Nurse Licensure Compact.²

To become initially licensed as an LPN or RN in Florida, an applicant must have completed an accredited or Board-approved pre-licensure nursing education program and passed the National Council of State Boards of Nursing Licensure Examination (NCLEX).³ Nurses licensed in other

¹ Florida Department of Health, Division of Medical Quality Assurance, *Annual Report and Long-Range Plan, Fiscal Year 2024-25*, at 10, available at <https://mqawebteam.com/annualreports/2425/2/> (last visited Jan. 28, 2025).

² *Id.* at 31.

³ Section 464.008, F.S.

states may apply for licensure by endorsement under the MOBILE Act.⁴ Additionally, Florida is a member of the Nurse Licensure Compact which enables RNs and LPNs licensed to practice in other compact states to be able to practice in Florida if they have been issued a multistate license under the compact.⁵

Within the nursing profession, there are two primary categories of licensure: practical nurses and professional nurses. The Nurse Practice Act, codified within part I of ch. 464, F.S., distinguishes between the practice of practical nursing and the practice of professional nursing.

Practical nursing consists of performing selected nursing acts, such as administering treatments and medications, under the direction of a registered nurse, physician, or certain other licensed health care providers. It focuses on the care of individuals who are ill or infirm, and on promoting wellness and preventing illness.⁶

Professional nursing involves the performance of acts that require substantial, specialized knowledge, judgment, and skill based on scientific principles from the psychological, biological, physical, and social sciences. This includes comprehensive responsibilities such as assessing and diagnosing patient needs, planning and evaluating care, administering treatments and medications under proper authorization, and supervising or teaching others in the performance of these duties.⁷

The licensed practical nurses (LPNs) are licensed to practice practical nursing under supervision whereas the registered (professional) nurses (RNs) are licensed to practice professional nursing. The RNs who complete additional graduate- or doctoral-level education may obtain licensure as an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN). In Florida, The APRNs are licensed in one or more of the following roles: nurse practitioner (NP), certified nurse midwife (CNM), clinical nurse specialist (CNS), psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner, and certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA).⁸

The APRNs seeking to register to practice primary care autonomously, or for CNMs seeking to register to practice midwifery autonomously, i.e. without physician supervision, must complete 3,000 clinical practice hours, which may include clinical instruction provided by faculty in a clinical setting in a graduate program leading to a master's or doctoral degree in a clinical nursing specialty area.⁹

Post-licensure Nursing Programs

A post-licensure nursing program is a nursing education program designed for people who are already licensed as nurses, most commonly RNs, who want to build upon their existing clinical foundation to advance their education, role, or specialty. Common programs include:

- Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN to BSN);

⁴ Section 456.0145, F.S.

⁵ Section 464.0095, F.S. *See also* National Council of State Boards of Nursing, *Participating Jurisdictions*, available at <https://www.nursecompact.com/index.page#map> (last visited Jan. 28, 2026).

⁶ Section 464.003(18), F.S.

⁷ Section 464.003(19), F.S.

⁸ Section 464.003(3), F.S.

⁹ Section 464.0123(1)(c), F.S.

- Master of Science in Nursing (MSN);
- Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP);
- Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.); and
- Specialty nursing certificates.

The Florida Center for Nursing reported that in 2023, 11.9 percent of Florida APRNs and 1.1 percent of RNs hold a DNP or a Ph.D. in nursing.¹⁰

A DNP degree focuses on advanced clinical practice and leadership. The DNP programs emphasize evidence-based care, system improvement, and public health, addressing Florida's health care needs, and managing chronic conditions.¹¹

A Ph.D. degree in nursing is research-focused and prepares nurses for careers as nurse scientists in primarily academic settings.¹²

Titles and Abbreviations

Within the Nurse Practice Act, s. 464.015, F.S., restricts the use of nursing titles and corresponding abbreviations such as RN, LPN, APRN, unless the individual holds a license as such.

Licenses who are found in violation of that section have committed the following acts, which are subject to disciplinary action:¹³

- *Making misleading, deceptive, or fraudulent representations in or related to the practice of the licensee's profession.*¹⁴
- *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.*¹⁵

For a nurse who violates either provision, the penalty can range from a reprimand and a \$250 fine up to a \$700 fine and license suspension.¹⁶

Current law does not explicitly authorize or prohibit the use of the titles "Doctor of Nursing Practice" or "Doctor of Philosophy" and the corresponding abbreviations, "D.N.P." or "Ph.D.," for persons who do not hold those degrees.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1 of the bill amends s. 464.015, F.S., to authorize only Florida-licensed or multistate compact-licensed nurses to use the titles "Doctor of Nursing Practice" or "Doctor of Philosophy"

¹⁰ Florida Center for Nursing, *State of the Nursing Workforce in Florida 2023*, at 15, available at

https://issuu.com/flcenterfornursing/docs/state_of_the_nursing_workforce_in_florida?ff (last visited Jan. 28, 2026).

¹¹ Department of Health, *SB 36 Legislative Bill Analysis* (Dec. 8, 2025) (on file with the Senate Committee on Health Policy).

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ Section 456.072(1)(a), F.S.

¹⁵ Section 456.072(1)(t), F.S.

¹⁶ 64B9-8.006, F.A.C.

and the corresponding abbreviations, “D.N.P.” or “Ph.D.,” if the nurse holds that doctoral degree.

A nurse who is licensed in another state or jurisdiction, but who is not licensed in Florida or through the Nurse Licensure Compact, may not use those titles or abbreviations even if the nurse holds that doctoral degree.

The bill requires doctoral degree holders to specify their professions when using the term “doctor.”

Licensees found to be in violation of the new requirements will be subject to disciplinary action under the existing grounds for discipline.

Section 2 of the bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2026.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None identified.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None identified.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None identified.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None identified.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None identified.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None identified.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None identified.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

The bill requires doctoral degree holders to specify their profession when using the term “doctor.” If this requirement is intended to apply only to nurses, then an amendment should be considered to narrow that provision’s scope.

VII. Related Issues:

None identified.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 464.015 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

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

None.

B. Amendments:

None.