



PROFESSIONAL  
CERTIFICATION  
COALITION

April 1, 2021

Rep. Kevin Wallace  
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Sen. James M. Leewright  
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**Re: OK H.B. 2873**

Dear Representative Wallace and Senator Leewright:

The Professional Certification Coalition (PCC) writes regarding OK H.B. 2873, which provides for licensing reciprocity.

The PCC is a nonprofit association founded in 2018 to address legislation and regulation that affects professional certification programs, those who hold private certification credentials, and the many constituencies that rely on professional certification as a signal of professional competence. The PCC's organizational members include non-governmental professional certification organizations, professional societies, and service providers, and reflect a wide spectrum of professions, including health care, professional and civil engineering, financial services, and information technology, among many others. Our founding organizations – the American Society of Association Executives (the leading organization for association management) and the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (the leading developer of accreditation standards for professional certification programs) – serve as the Steering Committee for the PCC.

The PCC supports reducing unnecessary barriers for licensed professionals who move to a new state, provided that any alternative pathways protect the public from unqualified or unethical practitioners and uphold the integrity of licensed professions as a whole. The PCC has developed the attached [Statement of Principles](#) and respectfully requests that the legislature ensure that the provisions of H.B. 15 are consistent with the following six principles:

- 1. Require further profession-specific action by licensing agencies, rather than automatically providing sweeping recognition of all out-of-state licenses.**
- 2. Require the licensing agency/board to make an initial assessment of whether licenses in other jurisdictions are, in fact, equivalent in standards and scope of practice.**
- 3. Permit reciprocal licensure as a general matter only if there is substantial similarity between the requirements, knowledge, and scope of practice for two jurisdictions.**

4. **Condition reciprocity on joint oversight of the licensee, as well as communication and mandatory reporting between the in-state and out-of-state licensing agencies.**
5. **Grant alternative pathways to licensure for unlicensed out-of-state applicants only if the applicant demonstrates at least substantially equivalent educational, training, examination, credentials, and experience as are required of in-state applicants.**
6. **Consider whether residency requirements are warranted to qualify for reciprocal licensure.**

The PCC members view these principles as important both to protect the public and because reciprocity bills directly affect PCC members that credential professionals in regulated occupations, such as health care. In many of these occupations, licensure statutes and regulations make certification by recognized private certification organizations a condition of licensure. If, due to variations in licensing laws, reciprocal licensure allows unqualified or unfit individuals to practice, the public's trust in such certified professionals and their respective regulated professions will be irreparably damaged, especially for occupations in which the public conflates certification status with licensure.

Further, even PCC members that issue certifications to individuals in fields that do not require licensure have an interest in this issue. Certification organizations – and professional societies that represent individuals who hold certification credentials – rely on the role of licensing agencies to protect the public. By their nature, they are also interested in upholding professional standards for knowledge, skills, conduct, and qualifications. If reciprocal licensure laws create loopholes that weaken how state licensing agencies enforce such standards, this is a matter of great concern to the certification community.

Thank you for your attention to these issues and consideration of the PCC's views.

Sincerely,



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CC:

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Rep. Andrew Fugate  
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Professional Certification Coalition Members

ABRET Neurodiagnostic  
Credentialing & Accreditation  
(ABRET)

ABSA International: the  
Association for Biosafety and  
Biosecurity (ABSA)

Academy of Nutrition and  
Dietetics (AND)

Academy for Certification of  
Vision Rehabilitation &  
Education Professionals  
(ACVREP)

Alliance of Hazardous  
Materials Professionals

American Association of Post-  
Acute Care Nurses (AAPACN)

American Association of  
Critical-Care Nurses (AACN)

American Association of  
Neuromuscular &  
Electrodiagnostic Medicine  
(AANEM)

American Association of  
Professional Landmen

American Board for  
Certification in Orthotics,  
Prosthetics and Pedorthics  
(ABCOP)

American Board of  
Certification for  
Gastroenterology Nurses  
(ABCGN)

American Board of  
Neuroscience Nursing (ABNN)

American Board of Post-Acute  
and Long-Term Care Medicine  
(ABPLM)

American Board of Foot and  
Ankle Surgery (ABFAS)

American Board of Wound  
Management (ABWM)

American Industrial Hygiene  
Association (AIHA)

American Medical  
Certification Association  
(AMCA)

American Nurses Credentialing  
Center (ANCC)

American Payroll Association  
(APA)

American Society of  
Association Executives  
(ASAE)

American Society of Civil  
Engineers (ASCE)

American Speech-Language-  
Hearing Association (ASHA)

American Traffic Safety  
Services Association (ATSSA)

American Translators  
Association (ATA)

American Veterinary Medical  
Association (AVMA)

Association for Financial  
Counseling & Planning  
Education (AFCPE)

Association for Financial  
Professionals (AFP)

Association of Surgical  
Technologists (AST)

Behavior Analyst Certification  
Board (BACB)

Building Industry Consulting  
Service International (BICSI)

Board of  
Certification/Accreditation  
(BOC)

Board of Certified Safety  
Professionals (BCSP)

Board of Pharmacy Specialties  
(BPS)

Building Commissioning  
Certification Board (BCCB)

CCIM Institute (issues the  
Certified Commercial  
Investment Member  
designation)

CFA Institute

Certification Board for Music  
Therapists (CBMT)

Certification Board of  
Infection Control and  
Epidemiology (CBIC)

Certification Council for  
Professional Dog Trainers

Certified Financial Planner  
Board of Standards (CFP)

Certified Fund Raising  
Executive International  
(CFRE)

Commercial Real Estate  
Certification Institute

Commission for Case Manager  
Certification (CCMC)

Commission on Nurse  
Certification (CNC)

CompTIA

Community Association  
Institute (CAI)

Construction Management  
Association of America  
(CMAA)

Council of Engineering and  
Scientific Specialty Boards  
(CESB)

Dental Assisting National  
Board (DANB)

Diving Equipment and  
Marketing Association  
(DEMA)

Entertainment Services and  
Technology Association  
(ESTA)

ETA International (ETA)

Events Industry Council (EIC)

Financial Planning Association  
(FPA)

Hearth, Patio, & Barbecue  
Education Foundation

Heuristic Solutions

Hospice and Palliative  
Credentialing Center (HPCC)

Institute for Credentialing  
Excellence (ICE)

Institute of Certified  
Management Accountants  
(ICMA)

Institute of Hazardous  
Materials Management  
(IHMM)

Institute of Internal Auditors  
(IIA)

Inteleos (includes the  
American Registry for  
Diagnostic Medical  
Sonography (ARDMS) and the  
Alliance for Physician  
Certification & Advancement  
(APCA))

Irrigation Association

International Association of  
Healthcare Central Service  
Material Management  
(IAHCSMM)

International Association of  
Lighting Designers (IALD)

International Coach Federation  
(ICF)

International Foundation for Retirement Education (InFRE)  
International Society of Automation (ISA)  
Institute of Real Estate Management (IREM)  
International Information System Security Certification Consortium (ISC<sup>2</sup>)  
IT Certification Council (ITCC)  
Laborers' International Union of North America Training & Education Fund (LIUNA)  
Medical-Surgical Nursing Certification Board (MSNCB)  
National Association of Legal Assistants, Inc. (NALA)  
National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors (NAIFA)  
National Association of Personal Financial Advisors (NAPFA)  
National Athletic Trainers' Association Board of Certification, Inc. (BOC)  
National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists (NBCRNA)  
National Board of Certification in Hearing Instrument Sciences (NBC-HIS)  
National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA)  
National Board of Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT)  
National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM)  
Certification Board for Diabetes Care and Education (CBDCE)  
National Certification Corporation (NCC)  
National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA)  
National Commission for Health Education Credentialing  
National Council on Family Relations (NCFR)  
National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

National Restaurant Association (NRA)  
National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA)  
National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE)  
Nephrology Nursing Certification Commission  
Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation  
Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH)  
Pediatric Nursing Certification Board (PNCB)  
Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB)  
PSI Services  
Pearson Vue  
QualityPro  
School Nutrition Association (SNA)  
SeaCrest Consulting  
Security Industry Association  
Society of Broadcast Engineers (SBE)  
Specialty Pharmacy Certification Board (SPCB)  
Spray Polyurethane Foam Alliance (SPFA)  
Towing and Recovery Association of America, Inc. (TRA)  
National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA)  
National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE)  
Nephrology Nursing Certification Commission  
Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation  
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## **Statement of Principles for Universal Licensure Recognition and Reciprocity**

The PCC supports the objective of reducing unnecessary barriers to entry to practice for licensed professionals who move to a new state. Not all state-specific licensure requirements are unwarranted, however. In their current form, many universal licensing bills may undermine protections for the public by adopting a one-size-fits-all approach to universal licensure and by exempting out-of-state applicants from establishing that they possess the same qualifications as in-state applicants.

### *Background:*

Occupational licensing laws operate as the gatekeepers to licensed professions: they establish the standards of education, training, and testing required to practice in a specific field. The purpose of licensing laws is to protect the public from unqualified or unethical practitioners, but opponents of licensing contend that the administrative and financial burdens of complying with licensing laws also limit opportunities to earn a living. Moreover, as each state independently establishes its own licensing laws, requirements vary by location; as a result, professionals must apply for a license each time they relocate across state borders. This can impose significant costs in time and money. Critics of state-specific licensure laws argue that, rather than protecting the public from unqualified practitioners, they primarily serve to insulate in-state professionals from out-of-state competition and are unnecessary barriers to practice for professionals who already hold a license in their field from another state.

In response, some states have adopted universal licensure recognition—or licensing reciprocity—and recognize a valid out-of-state license as sufficient for a professional to practice in their state, subject to additional conditions such as residency and background checks. Initially, this practice was largely restricted to specific interstate agreements or to populations with special circumstances. Many states now grant reciprocal licensure or temporary permits to military spouses who move into the state due to their spouse's change of duty assignment.<sup>1</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic national emergency has also led some states to enact reciprocal or accelerated licensing provisions for some professions.<sup>2</sup>

Recently, some states have enacted more expansive universal licensure bills, and many more such bills have been introduced. Unlike profession-specific reciprocal licensing state compacts, these bills generally apply to any licensing authority in the state, with limited exceptions. Some bills provide only for reciprocal licensure to applicants holding an occupational license granted by

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.veterans.gov/milspouses/>.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., <https://www.fsmb.org/siteassets/advocacy/pdf/state-emergency-declarations-licensure-requirements-covid-19.pdf> and <https://www.aanp.org/advocacy/state/emergency-state-licensure-covid-19-response>.

another state.<sup>3</sup> Other bills go further and authorize granting licenses to applicants based on work experience and/or private certification credentials, if the applicant's home state does not require a license to practice the occupation.

*Criteria for Responsible Legislation:*

The PCC urges state legislatures considering universal licensure bills to take into account the following key principles in order to ensure sufficient safeguards remain in place to protect the public and uphold the integrity of substantive licensure requirements.

**The PCC supports universal or reciprocal licensure laws that:**

- 1. Require further profession-specific action by licensing agencies, rather than automatically providing sweeping recognition of all out-of-state licenses.**
  - a. The level of oversight required to protect the public varies between licensed professions, and not all licensed professions merit the same level of reciprocity. For example, state licensing laws for some professions require licensees to demonstrate state-specific substantive knowledge (e.g., state Bar exams for lawyers<sup>4</sup> and California's requirement that all California-licensed engineers demonstrate knowledge about seismic strengthening for projects including retrofitting<sup>5</sup>). For other professions, licensing laws may have uniform requirements adopted by every state, such as in professions that require all licensees to have passed a national certification exam or to have completed specialized training.
  - b. State agencies should seek input from relevant, industry-specific stakeholders on the potential positive and negative consequences of universal licensure.
- 2. Require the licensing agency make an initial assessment of whether licenses in other jurisdictions are, in fact, equivalent in standards and scope of practice.**
  - a. The requirements to get licensed in a profession can vary widely between states. Depending on the profession, state licensure requirements may include different elements or differing levels of requirements for formal education, training, practical experience, national certification, verification of prior disciplinary or criminal conviction history, and character examinations.
  - b. Differences in licensing requirements across states cannot be broadly written off as bureaucratic red tape. Often, variance in licensing requirements corresponds

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<sup>3</sup> Arizona became the first state to adopt universal licensure when H.B. 2569 was signed into law on April 10, 2019. Under A.R.S. § 32-4302, Arizona will issue a license to new residents with a current, out-of-state license in the licensed profession, if the out-of-state licensee is in good standing, has been licensed for at least a year, and has passed a criminal background check. Montana, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania have passed similar statutes.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., [https://www.ncbex.org/pdfviewer/?file=%2Fassets%2FBarAdmissionGuide%2FCompGuide2020\\_021820\\_Online\\_Final.pdf#page=40](https://www.ncbex.org/pdfviewer/?file=%2Fassets%2FBarAdmissionGuide%2FCompGuide2020_021820_Online_Final.pdf#page=40).

<sup>5</sup> See [https://www.bpelsg.ca.gov/pubs/consumer\\_guide.pdf](https://www.bpelsg.ca.gov/pubs/consumer_guide.pdf).

with differences in the scope of practice a license permits. For example, in several states, licensed pharmacy technicians may administer immunizations, but also are subject to related training requirements associated with vaccinations.<sup>6</sup> In many other states, however, pharmacy technicians are not authorized to administer immunizations and therefore may not have received the relevant training.<sup>7</sup>

- c. Different states also have varying substantive prerequisites for licensure or renewal of licensure for some professions. For example, states vary as to whether passage of a national certification exam is required for licensure as a dental assistant,<sup>8</sup> and not all states require current certification for renewal of licensure as a physician assistant.<sup>9</sup>

**3. Permit reciprocal licensure as a general matter only if there is substantial similarity between the requirements, knowledge, and scope of practice for two jurisdictions.**

- a. Subject to limited and temporary exceptions, as for national emergencies and military spouses, state agencies should be authorized to grant reciprocal licensure only if the out-of-state license reflects an assurance of comparable qualifications and authorizes the full scope of practice granted by the in-state licensing law. Otherwise, in a race to the bottom, less qualified individuals could apply for initial licensure in states with less stringent requirements and rely on a universal licensure law to bypass the licensure conditions that other states have determined should be required for protection of the public.
- b. States with stricter licensing requirements should consider adopting bridging requirements that would enable licensed practitioners from other states to have an abbreviated path to licensure, by establishing that they have met the additional qualifications of that state.

**4. Condition reciprocity on joint oversight of the licensee, as well as communication and mandatory reporting between the in-state and out-of-state licensing agencies.**

- a. Licensees subject to pending disciplinary proceedings should not be granted reciprocal licensure until the proceedings are resolved. Mobility between states should not be a means to evade disciplinary oversight by a licensing board, even if a license in one state expires.
- b. Individuals granted reciprocity should be jointly subject to the new and old state licensing agencies' enforcement authority and rules.

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<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., [https://dopl.utah.gov/pharm/vaccine\\_administration\\_protocol.pdf](https://dopl.utah.gov/pharm/vaccine_administration_protocol.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.pharmacist.com/article/pharmacy-technicians-gear-immunize>.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://www.ada.org/en/education-careers/careers-in-dentistry/dental-team-careers/dental-assistant/education-training-requirements-dental-assistant>.

<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.aapa.org/download/19739/>.

**5. Grant alternative pathways to licensure for unlicensed out-of-state applicants only if the applicant demonstrates at least substantially equivalent educational, training, examination, credentials, and experience as are required of in-state applicants.**

- a. Prior work experience is not a substitute for examination-based or certification credentials, as it does not establish competency or skill. Similarly, not all private certifications are equivalent. There is no basis to presume that an unlicensed individual holding an unspecified private certification credential possesses equivalent qualifications as in-state licensed professionals hold, unless that private certification is a condition of licensure in the state.
- b. Requiring unlicensed out-of-state applicants to demonstrate substantive qualifications that are at least comparable to those required of in-state applicants would protect against bogus or flimsy certification programs being used as a substitute for licensure. At the same time, for licensed professions that condition licensure on private certification, accepting that certification from out-of-state applicants can provide an alternative pathway to universal licensure that still safeguards the public.

**6. Consider residency requirements.**

- a. State legislatures should consult with licensing agencies and industry stakeholders to determine whether intent to relocate should be a requirement for granting reciprocal licensure.