

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2015 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

Senate Bill 198 (Senator Nathan-Pulliam, *et al.*)  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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**Health Care Disparities, Cultural and Linguistic Competency, and Health Literacy - Continuing Education**

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This bill requires that specified applicants and licensed health care professionals complete required continuing education in health care disparities, cultural and linguistic competency, and health literacy as a condition of licensure or renewal of licensure. Specified health occupations boards must, in consultation with the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities and other State experts, adopt regulations requiring an applicant or health care professional to document participation in these continuing education topic areas.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** The affected health occupations boards can promulgate the required regulations and enforce the bill's continuing education provisions with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** Potential meaningful.

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**Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** Specified boards must adopt regulations that include (1) the number of hours of continuing education in the specified topic areas to be required and (2) the criteria the board will use to grant or deny a waiver from the continuing education requirements. It is the intent of the General Assembly that the regulations require that 5% to 10% of the total required continuing education credits be in the specified topic areas.

Each board, in consultation with the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities must approve at least one continuing education course addressing the required topic areas by January 1, 2016. An approved course must include instruction in addressing racial, ethnic, and gender-based disparities in health care treatment decisions. A board may approve courses that are included in continuing education programs certified by a professional association or similar entity.

**Exhibit 1** lists the specified boards and licensed health care professionals impacted by the bill.

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**Exhibit 1**  
**Health Occupations Boards and Licensed Health Care Professionals**  
**Subject to the Bill**

<b><u>Board</u></b>	<b><u>Licensed Health Care Professionals</u></b>
Dental Examiners	Dentists
Nursing	Registered nurses and licensed practical nurses
Optometry	Optometrists
Pharmacy	Pharmacists
Physicians	Physicians
Podiatric	Podiatrists
Professional Counselors and Therapists	All licensees
Psychologists	Psychologists
Social Work	Associate social workers Graduate social workers Certified social workers Certified social workers-clinical

Source: Department of Legislative Services

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**Current Law:** In general, health occupations boards have continuing education requirements specific to their various disciplines. The health occupations boards require licensees to complete continuing education during the period preceding the expiration of the license. Health care professionals submit evidence of completion of required continuing education to the appropriate health occupations board according to regulations adopted by respective health occupations boards.

**Small Business Effect:** Depending on the number of continuing education credit hours required and the availability of such courses, small health care practices and related

businesses may be impacted if professionals who must complete the continuing education requirements are unable to do so in a timely manner. Even so, since the health occupations boards already require licensees to complete continuing education, it is likely that the bill's requirements can be incorporated into the existing number of continuing education credits. Generally, boards specify the number of credit hours, but allow for a broad range of topics eligible for completion. For example, physicians must complete 50 credit hours of continuing medical education during the two-year period immediately preceding submission of the renewal or reinstatement application. Activities are restricted not by topic, but by whether the activity(ies) are accredited. However, the bill has a potential meaningful impact to the extent that licensed health care professionals must complete additional units of continuing education to fulfill both board and general course requirements or that the required courses are more costly than current courses.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** HB 1404 of 2014 was assigned to the House Rules Committee, but no further action was taken on the bill.

**Cross File:** HB 580 (Delegate Pena-Melnyk, *et al.*) - Health and Government Operations.

**Information Source(s):** Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 23, 2015  
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