



To: Members of the House Labor & Commerce Committee
From: Joelle Hall, President of the Alaska AFL-CIO
CC: Members of the House Military and Veterans Affairs Committee
Date: Apr 14, 2023
Subject: HB 149 - NURSING: LICENSURE; MULTISTATE COMPACT

The Alaska AFL-CIO opposes HB 149 on the following grounds:

Will not solve the “workforce shortage” it aims to address—anti-local hire: The nursing shortage exists nationwide, and joining the Compact will not cause nurses to stream to Alaska. In fact, many compact states are facing worse nurse shortages than non-compact states. As it stands already, many nurses licensed in Alaska live out-of-state. Instead, we should focus on training and retaining our own Alaska nurses.

Loss of state sovereignty: Alaskans know what’s best for Alaska. Under our current system, key decisions regarding nursing standards and regulations are made by Alaskans for Alaskans. HB 149 would cede local control and force Alaska to adopt standards and regulations put in place by an “Interstate Commission” that does not have the best interest of our state in mind. This “Interstate Commission” is the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), a private, Chicago-based trade association. And as a result, the quality of care for Alaskans would decrease.

Decrease in quality of care: Alaska has rigorous licensure requirements for nurses, which are necessary for providing the quality of care many Alaskans need and deserve. While the uniform licensure requirements under the National Council of State Boards of Nursing are no less stringent than the current Alaska state licensing requirements, the Alaska State Legislature grants the Board of Nursing discretion to wave certain requirements if it is in the public interest. Alaska also has strong license renewal requirements and the ability to update and amend as needed. Under the Compact, license renewal requirements would be controlled by the state that issues the Compact license.

Threat to public safety: The Alaska Board of Nursing protects the health and safety of the public by regulating the practice of nursing in our state. Each state has different criteria for evaluating fitness to practice in regards to criminal background. Compact licensure requirements state that nurses must have no state or federal felony convictions, nor have any misdemeanor convictions related to the practice of nursing. However, felony offense statutes are not standardized across states. What constitutes a misdemeanor in one state may be classified as a felony under Alaska law. Yet, the State of Alaska would no longer have the ability to bar that nurse from coming to Alaska and caring for patients in our state, let alone know if or where they are practicing in the state.