



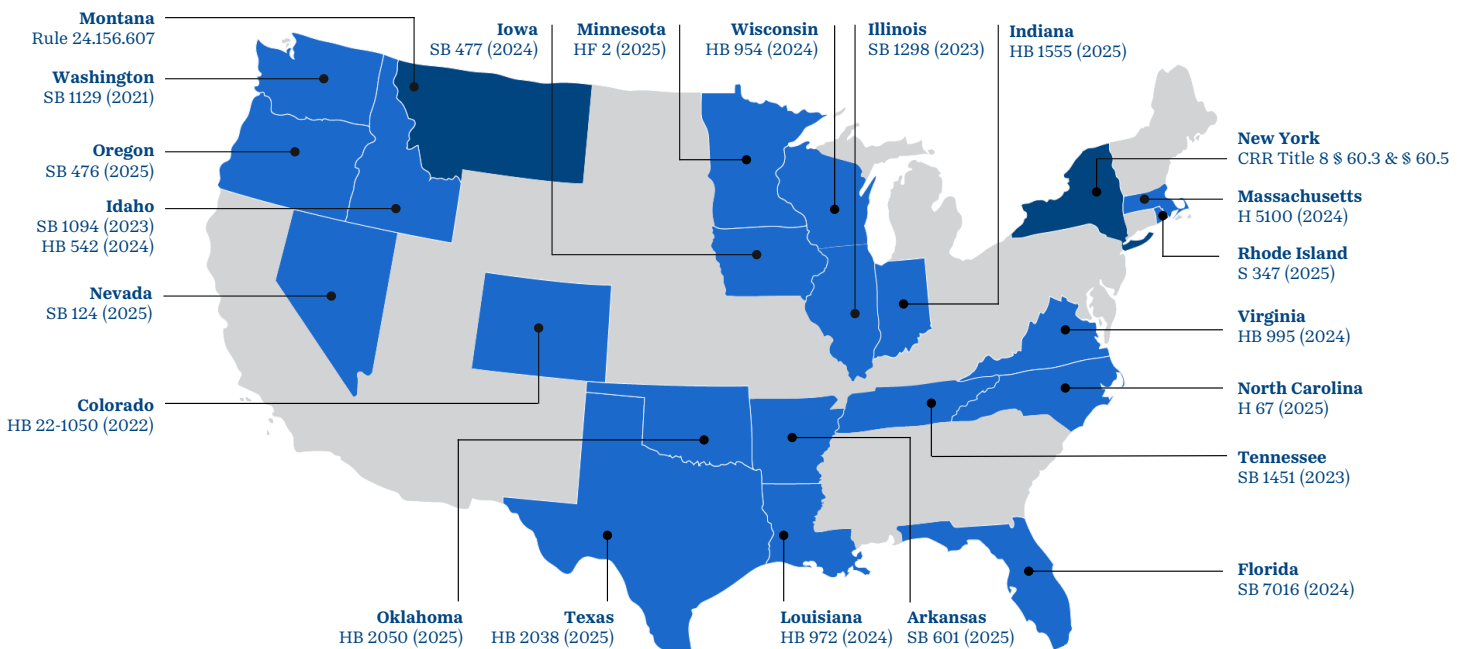
Policy Brief: Alternative Pathways to Licensure for Internationally Trained Physicians in the U.S.

Unlocking Talent to Strengthen the Physician Workforce

- Many internationally trained physicians completed their medical education and clinical training abroad and practiced in other countries before immigrating to the United States. They bring years of professional experience yet face barriers to re-entering the physician workforce.
- Their professional experience is often not recognized, and they're expected to repeat their clinical training in the U.S.
- These barriers persist despite rising health care needs driven by an aging population and physician workforce shortages.
- States are creating alternative licensure pathways that uphold standards equivalent to those U.S.-trained physicians are held to, while expanding access to quality care.

State Action and Policy Recommendations

- As of September 2025, 22 states had created alternative licensure pathways—20 since 2021—with bipartisan support across the U.S.
- All pathways are tied to employer needs: Internationally trained physicians must secure a job offer before applying for licensure.
- Many states focus on primary care, particularly in underserved or rural communities.
- States that have successfully enacted these laws often:
 - Engage health care employers and professional associations to align policy with workforce needs and regulatory standards
 - Involve community stakeholders early in the policy development process to secure buy-in and build support
 - Clearly communicate the need to address physician shortages—especially in rural areas where access is at risk—to create urgency and position the policy as a targeted solution
- These reforms promote excellence, expand access, and support high-quality care.



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